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A REEL OF RAINBOW

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A Reel of Rainbow

BY

F. W. BOREHAM

AUTHOR OF

'THE SILVER SHADOW,' 'THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL,' 'FACES IN THE FIRE,' 'MUSHROOMS ON THE MOOR,' 'THE GOLDEN MILESTONE,' 'MOUNTAINS IN THE MIST,' 'THE LUGGAGE OF LIFE,' ETC.

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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

Noko, a dusky little maiden of nine, used to come scampering along the track through the scrub, often accompanied by Piki, her baby brother. She was a laughing-eyed, tousle-headed little rogue. She loved to steal away from the native encampment to play with children of a fairer skin. The climax of her felicity was reached when we gave her cotton-reels with which to make herself a necklace. She would sit for hours out on the cliffs arranging and re-arranging it.

One afternoon, as she was playing near the house with her brother, a storm swept up, and the children ran in for shelter. When the thunder-shower had passed, a magnificent rainbow arched the eastern sky.

'Is it a *new* rainbow,' Noko asked, 'or is it the same rainbow that I saw before?'

'Oh, it's a new one,' I replied. 'There's a new rainbow for every storm!'

'Why, then,' she exclaimed in delight, 'there must be *reels and reels of rainbow* in the gully over the hill!'

There are; and in these pages I have tried to unwind one of them. I trust that my clumsy fingers have not damaged the delicate fabric.

FRANK W. BOREHAM.

Armadale, Melbourne, Australia.
Easter, 1920.

PART I

I

OUR MAIDEN AUNTS

We grow out of our aunts as we grow out of our clothes. We leave our aunts behind us as the nautilus leaves its shell. Once upon a time, in the golden days of childhood, Auntie was the central figure in our rapturous ecstasy of hero-worship. She was our fairy-godmother, our queen of romance, and our patron saint all rolled into one. What excitement when the postman brought a letter to say that Auntie was coming! How we counted the leaden-footed days that preceded her arrival! With what boisterous glee we welcomed her when, at the long last, she appeared! With what a flutter of delight we followed her from room to room, admiringly marking every movement, and eagerly pouring into her attentive ear the thrilling story of all our schoolboy adventures. And, when the visit drew to its close, with what bitter tears we witnessed her departure! The engine of the train that bore her from us seemed like some heartless monster, created only to make us wretched; and our walk home from the station was like a funeral march!

We had heard of angels' visits, but had never consciously experienced one. We knew that Santa

Claus came to the home quite regularly once a year. Could we not trace him by the trail of toys that he always left behind him? Still, the fact remained that we had never caught a glimpse of him or heard the accents of his voice. He had rather purchased our gratitude than won our hearts. But with Auntie it was quite otherwise. Her visits were infinitely better than angels' visits, for, unlike the angels, she actually materialized. We could clasp her hand, cluster round her knees, and feel her kisses on our upturned faces. Her presents were far better than the nocturnal bequests of Santa Claus, for she handed them to us herself; and that innate love of mystery to which Santa Claus appealed was, in her case, excited and gratified by the carrier's arrival with her luggage. That carrier was sometimes so terribly slow in delivering Auntie's travelling-trunk and heavy portmanteau! There were no visits, mortal or celestial, like Auntie's visits. She came; she saw; she conquered. Day after day she petted and pampered us, loudly applauding every tiniest virtue and benevolently excusing our most flagrant faults. No; in those days there was no one quite like Auntie!

But we grew out of her; or, perhaps, she grew away from us. At any rate, a time came when Auntie loomed a little less largely on our youthful horizon. Her ways were not our ways, nor her thoughts our thoughts. Her ways, of course, were old-fashioned ways and her thoughts antiquated

thoughts. We smiled in good-humoured disdain at the odd opinions she expressed and the quaint notions she held. If, as sometimes happened, we had occasion to rebuke the archaic and obsolete ideas of our fathers and our mothers, we could administer no more biting censure than to tell them that they were really as bad as Auntie! As bad as Auntie! Poor Auntie! She had come by this time to be merely the object of our tolerant and superior derision! Even our literature has caught this unfortunate temper. What is it that Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes sings about Aunt Tabitha?

> Whatever I do and whatever I say,
> Aunt Tabitha tells me that isn't the way:
> When she was a girl (forty summers ago)
> Aunt Tabitha tells me they never did so.
>
> I am thinking if aunt knew so little of sin,
> What a wonder Aunt Tabitha's aunt must have been!
> And her grand-aunt—it scares me—how shockingly sad
> That we girls of to-day are so frightfully bad!

Here, then, enshrined in classical verse, is the story of the fall of Auntie. It is a fall from which she rarely recovers. For, when we told our fathers and our mothers that they were as bad as Auntie, we were not serious. So far as father and mother were concerned, we said it playfully, or, at worst, in a gust of momentary wrath. For, as youth gave place to maturity, the thought of father and of mother steadily gained upon us. In the early days father

and mother were the most prosaic commonplaces when Auntie was about. But, later on, they increased as she decreased. Their star waxed whilst hers waned. Poor Auntie gradually took her place among our fallen idols; and then, like most things that have fallen, she was soon swept out of our lives altogether.

This is all very pitiable—and very unjust. Humanity has some ugly habits; but, of all our discourtesies, few are more repulsive than our unmannerly way of passing from an utterly unreasonable fondness to an equally unreasonable contempt. We idolize and then we spurn. It is very absurd, and our aunts have been victimized by the absurdity. They may not have merited the overweening admiration which, in the days of long ago, we so unstintedly lavished upon them. But they certainly did not deserve the scornful contumely which we showed them in the days that immediately followed. As a matter of fact, the world owes a very great deal to its aunts; and I am afraid that the debt, which can never be paid, has never even been generously acknowledged. I shudder to think of the poverty of an auntless world. Aunts are part of our human heritage. Among beasts and birds the aunt finds no place at all. The creatures of the wilds soon lose trace of their parents; it never occurs to them to recognize their aunts. It is part of the dignity of humanity that man finds himself involved in a wider circle of relationships. We

have it in us to sink lower and to rise higher than the beasts, and we need ampler guardianship in consequence. Hence the institution of aunthood; and, taking it as a whole, it has served its purpose nobly. Let me take one or two cases at random.

Should we have heard of Tolstoy but for Aunt Tatiana? Leo never knew his mother; his father died when he was nine; and the orphan boy soon discovered that he had stumbled into a very wild world at a very turbulent time. The life around him was as vicious as it could well be. He was taught that there is no God and that all religion is a mischievous invention. 'Every time I tried to express the longings of my soul for a truly virtuous life I was met with contempt and derisive laughter, but directly I gave way to the lowest of my passions I was praised and encouraged.' But, after the fashion of her kind, Aunt Tatiana rushed to the rescue and saved the entire situation. It would be difficult—Mr. Winstanley tells us in his monograph of Tolstoy—to imagine a character more sweet and self-sacrificing; upon the orphaned children she bestowed a devoted affection; to Leo she took the place of the mother he had never known and the father he had lost so soon. She was the chief happiness of his childhood, and in the building up of his moral character she, of all human beings, played the most beneficent part. 'Aunt Tatiana,' he says himself, 'had the greatest influence on my life. It was she who taught me, whilst yet in my childhood,

the moral joy of a pure affection, not by words, but by her whole being, and imbued me with admiration for all good things. I saw how happy she was in loving, and I understood the joy of love. That was the first lesson. And the second was that a quiet and lonely life may nevertheless be an exquisitely beautiful one.' So our poor little orphan, wrapped about by an environment that bristled with perils of every kind, grew up, as Mr. Stead once said, to be 'a great genius, a consummate artist, a religious apostle, and the most notable man of letters that the Europe of his time produced.' Let us put this down to the credit of aunts in general and of Aunt Tatiana in particular!

One could, of course, go on like this indefinitely; but I shall only cite two other instances, one from either side of the Atlantic. Southey and Emerson have not much in common; but they are alike in one respect. Each had an aunt. Southey never wrote anything finer, in prose or poetry, than his description of his Aunt Tyler. To his dying day he never forgot the incalculable debt he owed her. And as for Emerson, nobody can understand Emerson who has not made the acquaintance of Emerson's aunt. Mary Moody Emerson was a most vigorous and original character, and she gave her reflective young nephew the full benefit of her commanding personality. 'She made the most exacting demands upon him,' Mr. Percival Chubb tells us; 'she keenly watched his spiritual development; she perused his

journals; she admonished him of his faults; she was liberal in counsels of perfection.' All this is very auntish; but therein lies its significance. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the influence of Mary Moody Emerson must be judged by its results. And the result was—*Emerson!* The aunt's correspondence stands among the curiosities of literature. Anybody with half an eye can detect the germ of all Emerson's brilliant essays in his aunt's no less brilliant letters. 'Scorn trifles,' she says in one of them; 'lift your aims; do what you are afraid to do! Sublimity of character must come from sublimity of motive.' Could anything be more exquisitely Emersonian? Her nephew himself never said anything finer!

A cheer for Aunt Tatiana, who gave us Tolstoy!

A cheer for Aunt Tyler, who gave us Southey!

A cheer for Aunt Mary, who gave us Emerson!

A cheer for each; three cheers in all; and then a cheer for the aunthood that, in the background of the world, has enriched the world beyond all calculation and all count!

Aunthood lies just off the main road. Grandmother, mother, daughter, granddaughter—this is life's grand highway, its principal thoroughfare. But aunthood is distinctly a side street; in some respects a blind alley; but, like other blind alleys, possessing advantages peculiar to itself. When, at dead of night, market-carts come thundering down this street in which I live, bearing the next day's

supplies to the city markets, I turn wearily upon my pillow and envy the dwellers in the blind alleys. But we need not stress that point. It will suffice for our present purposes to say that aunthood is a side street. And side streets are useful streets. I was passing only yesterday along the main street. It was in the hands of the road-menders. Carts were passing to and fro, heavily laden with stones and gravel and tar; and the steam-roller was lumbering wearily backwards and forwards. Traffic was diverted—diverted into the side streets! Aunthood, I repeat, is essentially a side street. But it often happens that the main thoroughfare is blocked. Mother is on holiday; mother is ill; or, saddest of all, mother is dead! Then all the traffic is diverted—diverted into a side street, diverted from motherhood to aunthood. Hanging on the walls of homes, I have often seen a certain question: 'What is home without a mother?' I have seen the question; I have never seen the answer; I know not why. The answer, of course, is that home without a mother is the supreme opportunity of an aunt.

In a pigeon-hole quite close to my hand I keep a sheet of foolscap containing a list of the subjects on which I should some day like to write. It is a terribly long one, and I fear that I can never hope, in this world, to reach the end of it. And, near the end, I see suggested 'A Philosophy of Stop-gaps.' I should like, if I live long enough, to pay a modest tribute to all the people who served the world

bravely, not in their own right, but as emergencies, stop-gaps, substitutes for those who failed. It will contain stories like Mr. Spurgeon's record of his conversion. 'In the chapel in which I took refuge that wintry morning there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. The minister did not arrive; snowed-up, I suppose. A poor man, a shoemaker, a tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach.' And so, by way of a stop-gap, the work of grace was wrought. My 'Philosophy of Stop-gaps' will, of course, reach its climax in the story of the sublimest act of substitution ever known in this world or in any other. But, somewhere among the paragraphs of that far-off philosophy, I shall certainly do homage to that queenly order of substitutes, the noble army of aunts. It is the divine mission of Auntie to take Mother's place; and then to sink into herself again and live on memories. Aunthood is our second line of defence.

It is in pursuance of that divine, pathetic mission that aunthood recalls us to our better selves and incidentally develops sainthood. We have all shed tears over Ian Maclaren's lovely idyll, *His Mother's Sermon.* The Scottish mother is dying, and she calls to her bedside her son, her only son, who hopes one day to be a minister.

'I canna see ye noo, John,' she said feebly, as she felt for his head and stroked his hair, 'but I know yir there, an' I've just one other wish. If God calls ye to the ministry, ye'll no refuse, an' the first day

ye preach in yir ain kirk, speak *a guid word for Jesus Christ,* an' John, I'll hear ye that day, though ye'll no see me, and I'll be satisfied!'

They buried her, and the years slipped away. He had passed through a brilliant course at the University; had taken the MacWhammel Scholarship, and had accepted a call to his first church. His aunt—his mother's sister—went with him to keep house; and he settled down to prepare his first sermon. He felt that, in view of his distinguished academic career, something particularly scholarly would be expected of him; and he tried to rise to the occasion. His aunt looked dubiously at the forbidding manuscript; and, catching sight of her clouded face, he pressed her for an explanation.

'It's no for me tae advise ye, laddie,' she said, 'I'm only a simple old woman; but I'm just anxious aboot the flock o' sheep the Lord has given ye tae feed for Him. They're no clever or learned like what ye are, but juist plain country folk, ilka ane wi' his ain temptation, an' a' sair trackled wi' mony cares o' this world. They'll need a clear word to comfort their herts and show them the way everlasting. Ye'll say what's richt, nae doot o' that, and a' body'll be pleased wi' ye; but oh, laddie, be sure ye say *a guid word for Jesus Christ!'*

The clever manuscript went into the fire that night; and next day a sermon was preached in Drumtochty that brought tears to the eyes of old and young.

His aunt met him in the study, and when he looked on her his lips quivered, for his heart was wrung with one wistful regret.

'Oh, Auntie, if *she* had only been spared to see this day, and her prayers answered!'

But his aunt flung her arms around his neck.

'Dinna be cast down, laddie, nor be unbelievin'. Yir mither has heard every word, and is satisfied, for ye did it in remembrance of her, and yon was yir mither's sermon!'

Yes, partly! Partly his mother's and partly his aunt's! The mother's sermon would never have been preached but for the aunt's gentle reproof and tactful reminder. Blessed are all they who carry to their perfect consummation life's broken ministries! Blessed are all they who recall our wayward affections and renew our better selves! Blessed are all they who bring back to our withered spirits the tender grace of a day that is dead! Blessed are all stop-gaps and substitutes, all who take other people's places and do other people's work! And because conspicuously among these angels of our pilgrimage stands the sacred sisterhood of maiden aunts, I respectfully entreat their acceptance of this big bunch of beatitudes!

II

SPILT MILK

Fred Townsend is a capital fellow; but he is developing one extremely bad habit. He neither drinks nor cheats nor swears; nor does he render his numerous virtues repulsive by parading them. But, sad to say, he quotes proverbs; and, as a rule, the man who falls into the habit of quoting proverbs is beyond redemption. I do not mean to imply that Fred's case is already hopeless; the habit is not a confirmed one; he may yet be rescued. But I have heard him succumb to the vice several times lately, and have felt no small alarm in consequence. Proverbs are like pebbles—pretty, but pointless. They have drifted to and fro on the tides of interminable talk until all the sharp edges that they once possessed have been worn off. They are now smooth and shapely, nicely rounded and symmetrical —and that is all. The pretty pebble has a charm for the eye; the neatly-turned proverb has a jingle for the ear; but that is as far as it goes.

The man who acquires the habit of quoting proverbs is not to be trusted. He must always be regarded with suspicion. In his company his friends must be on their guard. As an oyster conceals its

flaws by means of a pearl, so this man will cover his faults with a proverb. And the proverb will make the vice look for all the world like a virtue. If he comes down to breakfast after the bacon and coffee have been served, he will pass it off with a 'Better late than never.' All through the day he will cast a glamour over all his defects by treating you to a pyrotechnic display of really brilliant epigrams. He has a proverb to suit every mood and to fit every contingency. If he wants your help, he will say, 'Many hands make light work'; if he wishes to do the work by himself, he says that 'Too many cooks spoil the broth'; and in either case he makes you feel that the last word has been spoken. He is asked to invest in a newly launched enterprise. If he feels inclined to yield, he declares that 'Faint heart never won fair lady,' or mutters to himself, 'Nothing venture, nothing win.' If he does not like the prospect of the speculation, he says that 'A bird in the hand is worth two in a bush.' His supply of quotations never fails him. He bristles with proverbs as a porcupine bristles with quills, and you can scarcely touch him without getting impaled on one or other of them. A most uncomfortable person is the confirmed purveyor of proverbs. But I hasten to repeat, and to repeat with the sincerest gratification, that to this depth Fred Townsend has not yet sunk.

I must confess, however, that last evening a casual remark of his filled me with the gravest apprehension. We were the guests of a mutual friend. The

rain was driving pitilessly against the windows; the fire was blazing brightly and shedding on us all that genial gaiety which it can only command on very stormy nights; the bagatelle-board was open in the centre of the room, and the shaded lights were casting all their lustre on the red and white balls as they moved so noiselessly and clicked so musically on the soft green baize. The game was at a critical stage when Fred, who is really an excellent player, made a wretchedly poor stroke and altered the whole appearance of the contest. 'Ah, well,' he said laughingly, as he turned from the board and threw himself on the couch, 'it's no good crying over spilt milk!' It sounded well, as proverbs invariably do. That is the worst of it. Our darling and most dangerous sins are usually comely sins, graceful sins, beautiful sins, popular sins. Therein lies their peril. You felt that you liked Fred all the better for the easy-going nonchalance with which he passed off his unpardonable stroke. 'No good crying over spilt milk!' he said, as he laid aside his cue, drew his little niece to his knee, and began playing with her doll. It sounded well; it made him appear sportsmanlike; but I cannot acquit him on these grounds. Fred is at a very critical stage. I could see by the way in which he quoted the proverb that he did it with enjoyment and relish. I felt towards him as I should feel towards a young fellow in whose eyes I caught a sparkle of passionate delight as he tossed off a glass of wine. I must do what I can to save

Fred before he goes too far. If he once becomes an inveterate quoter of proverbs, he is lost. It is now or never with Fred.

The man who says that it is no good crying over spilt milk has never spilt any milk. I have; and even as I write, the bitterness of that experience rushes back upon me. I see once more the home of my boyhood; the gate under the laburnums; and the track across the fields to the milkman's. How I loved to be sent along that path at milking-time! The fields were connected with the dairy; the foot-path ran, therefore, across private property; a terrifying notice-board warned all youthful adventurers that there was 'No admission except on business,' and, moreover, that 'Trespassers would be prosecuted.' I often looked wistfully across those fields. There were daffodils nodding among the grass; there was a jungle of blackberry bushes between the foot of the fields and the railway line beyond; and one day I actually saw a big white stoat creep out from behind a hollow tree and steal silently up the bank. Before he vanished into a hole among the bushes he paused for a second, his little black tail pointing towards me, his pure ermine robe glistening in the morning sunlight, and his head thrown back over his shoulders, whilst, with his wicked little pink eyes, he watched my movements. But from all these wild delights I was excluded by the notice-board. The notice-board scared me. I loved the green hills and the open sky; the prospect of languishing

for the rest of my days in some loathsome prison-dungeon acted as a powerful deterrent; and I restrained my passion for exploration. But with a milk-can in my hand, the whole situation was changed. With a milk-can in my hand I could defy the notice-board! 'No admission except on business'—but the milk-can showed that I *had* business! 'Trespassers will be prosecuted'—but the milk-can proved that I was *not* a trespasser! Armed with that talisman, I set out fearlessly among the daffodils and the blackberries—and the stoats!

He was a genial old man, the man who kept the dairy. I always went in good time, partly because I could not tell beforehand exactly how long the daffodils, the blackberries, and the stoats would take, and partly because I liked to be on the spot when the cows were led in to the byre. I loved to see them pause, lower their heads and stare at me, and then, moo-ing gently, pass on to their places in the shed. I used to think that the odour of the place was the loveliest perfume I had ever inhaled. I liked to see the dairyman and his daughters put on their caps, take their seats with their heads gently pressed to the sides of the cows, and make the shining pails musical as the milk from the udders played merrily upon them. The old gentleman always put a spare stool just inside the door for me to sit upon until my milk was ready.

And one dreadful day, in returning across the fields, I spilt the milk! I was watching a lark that

was just preparing to swoop to its nest in the grass; I stumbled over a stone on the side of the path; and, falling headlong, I had the mortification of seeing the white, white milk spreading itself over the dusty track! It was the lark's fault, of course; but that did not restore the milk to the can. Here it was, trickling away all over the ground, discovering for itself new channels in every rut and footprint! The milk-can—the magic charm that had opened to me the gates of these elysian fields—was lying impotently upon its side against a tuft of speargrass, the last slow drops of whiteness dripping sadly out of it. It seems a small affair now; but it overwhelmed me that day with a sense of desolating calamity. The mistaken footstep was so irrevocable; the spilt milk was so irrecoverable; the whole catastrophe was so irretrievable, so incurable, so remorselessly final! It was done, and could never be undone! If it had been vegetables, or groceries, or meat, or any of the things that concerned me on other errands, they could have been picked up again, brushed, and taken home, scarcely the worse for their misadventure! But milk! Spilt milk! There was no way of repairing the damage I had so suddenly done.

Moreover, I was in disgrace! I felt that I should never be entrusted with the coveted milk-can again. I was one of many brothers; my errands would probably be confined to the shops in days to come; and I hated the shops. Somebody else would be sent

for the milk; somebody else would swing defiantly past the threatening notice-board; somebody else would gather a handful of daffodils; somebody else would pick the blackberries; and, worst of all, somebody else would creep stealthily along the bank to see if there was any sign of the pink-eyed, white-robed stoat; I was saying good-bye to it all! I threw myself down in the grass and I yielded to a tempest of tears! And if Fred Townsend or anybody else had tortured me by telling me that 'it is no good crying over spilt milk,' I believe that I should have risen in my wrath and hurled the empty milk-can at his head. And, honestly, I hope I should have hit it. Dickens says, in *Great Expectations*, that 'we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are like rain upon the blinding dust of earth.' I look back across the years at that far-off day among the daffodils, and most certainly I am not ashamed of the tears that I then shed.

Really, if we are not to cry over spilt milk, what *are* we to cry over? If it is wrong to cry over spilt milk, I can conceive of no conditions under which weeping is excusable. If we are not to cry over spilt milk, there can be no justification for tears at all. Charles Mackay says that there are no eyes so pathetic as tearless eyes.

O ye tears, O ye tears! I am thankful that ye run;
Though ye trickle in the darkness, ye shall glitter in the sun:
The rainbow cannot shine if the rain refuse to fall,
And the eyes that cannot weep are the saddest eyes of all.

But, if Fred Townsend's flippantly quoted imposture were not false, but true, all eyes would be tearless and all faces would be sad. The tears that we shed over spilt milk are the tribute that we pay to the irrevocabilities of life, and, so far from being of no use, I shall show that they serve a sublime and noble end.

There is all the difference in the world between spilt milk and spilt water. It is not merely a difference in their respective commercial values. The water spilt upon the ground is no real loss at all; it has merely soaked into the filtering earth; it will find its way back into the hidden springs and secret fountains; and will in due course reappear to refresh and satisfy some other thirsty soul. But with spilt milk it is otherwise. The spilt milk does not flow back to the dairy to replenish the milkmaid's cans. The spilt milk appears to be a sheer waste. The precious fluid twists and trickles for a few moments among the ruts and the footprints, and then, vanishing, is gone for ever. It is lost; hopelessly, eternally, irrecoverably lost. In one way the loss of my milk is more distressing, and more provocative of tears, than the loss of my money. If I lose my money, somebody else will find it; but if I spill my milk, it is lost, not only to me, but to the universe. If I lose my money, my loss is somebody else's gain; but if I spill my milk, my misfortune profits no living soul. Let Fred Townsend consider this, and he will never babble proverbial nonsense

again. Spilt milk represents the sorest of earthly losses; and if either Fred Townsend or some more inveterate quoter of proverbs tells me that under such conditions I am not to weep, I shall demand that he shall state explicitly under what circumstances tears *may* be shed.

'It's no good crying over spilt milk,' Fred declared last night. But isn't it? Is it not a fact that some of the most impressive lessons we have ever learned have come to us through tears shed under just such circumstances? I am very fond of a good biography. And I have found few things more profitable than to notice the regrets—the apparently unavailing regrets—of the men whose lives are thus recorded. Just now, for example, I am reading aloud of an evening Professor Blaikie's noble *Life of Livingstone*. And as we have made our way through the pages of that stirring romance we have been touched almost to tears by two exceptionally pathetic passages. In each case Livingstone is crying over spilt milk. After his children have left him and gone to England, he is overtaken by a sad and bitter remorse. He feels a pang of deep regret that, in spending all his energy in evangelizing the natives of Central Africa, he has not devoted some portion of his time to a romp with the children. 'I was so much exhausted,' he says, 'with the mental and manual labour of the day that in the evening there was no fun left in me. I did not play with my little ones while I had them, and they soon sprang up

in my absences and left me conscious that I had none to play with.'

The other tears were shed in connexion with the death and burial of his wife. He had thought it best that Mrs. Livingstone should remain in the South until he had prepared for her a home at Lake Nyassa. He accordingly set out on his solitary enterprise. But after a while he heard of cruel scandals that were being passed from mouth to mouth. It was hinted that only when men were unhappy at home did they leave their wives and set out on long journeys by themselves. A doctor of divinity was known to have remarked that 'Mrs. Livingstone was no good; her husband could not live with her.' Stung to the quick by such gossip, Livingstone resolved to silence it by sending for his wife. She came; she sickened; and she died. Who can forget the inexpressible anguish of that Sunday evening in the heart of Africa, when he sat in the forest, holding her dying hand? Who can forget the scene under the great baobab-tree, at Thupanga, when he laid her bones to rest? His journal becomes a broken-heated moan, a pitiful sob. Livingstone reproached himself with bitter tears for having taken any notice of the malignant whispers. In each case the great traveller was crying over spilt milk. The children with whom he had forgotten to play were children no longer; they could never be children again! His wife was dead, dead, dead! An ocean of tears could not bring her back to him. And yet,

and yet——! This great drama of African travel has been read by millions. And what father ever perused that first entry without turning with a new tenderness to the laughing little faces at his knee? Again, who can read that second entry, and listen to the bitter cry, without registering a high and firm resolve to follow his own judgement and obey his own conscience in spite of Mrs. Grundy and all her brood? Could Fred Townsend tell Livingstone, on either of these heart-rending occasions, that it is no good crying over spilt milk? Why, we are all of us better for the tears he shed.

No good crying over spilt milk! Tell that story to the prodigal; tell it to Peter; tell it to any penitent in the history of this old world of ours! Yes, tell it to Peter! Peter went out and wept bitterly. He was crying over spilt milk most certainly, for his wild words of denial could never be unsaid. Yet his soul was unspeakably softened and sweetened by the tears he shed. Or tell it to the prodigal! In his *De Profundis,* which was written in jail, Oscar Wilde says that 'the moment the prodigal son fell upon his knees and wept, he made the time that he spent in the far country the most beautiful and most holy period of his life. It is difficult,' he goes on to say, 'for most people to grasp this idea. I dare say one has to go to prison to understand it. If so, it is worth while going to prison.' I am very fond of Fred Townsend, and should be sorry to think of him as being behind prison-bars. But I

could even resign him to such a fate if it would save him from becoming an inveterate quoter of proverbs, and teach him the value of the tears that are daily shed over milk that has been spilt.

III

HIDE-AND-SEEK

'WHERE's my cap?'

'Where's my coat?'

'Where's my book?'

'Where's mother? Where's mother?'

Where? Where? Where?—that is always the question. It is the first question that we hear—or ask—in the morning; and for a perfectly sufficient reason. It is the first question in the morning because it is the first question in the very nature of things. Of all human questionings, this question must for ever hold its pride of place. As soon as there is a sign of life in a human body, a baby hand is stretched out in search of an Earthly Mother; as soon as there is a sign of life in a human soul, a trembling hand is stretched out in search of a Heavenly Father.

'Where is She?' says the baby cry, properly interpreted. 'Show us the Mother, and it sufficeth us.'

'Where is He?' says the soul at its awakening. 'Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.'

Where? Where? Where? It is always, Where?

It is the first question in the Old Testament; it is the first question in the New.

'Where art thou?' said the voice in the Garden; God seeking after man.

'Where is He?' said the Wise Men from the East; men seeking after God. 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!'

Where? Where? Where? It is always, Where? The instinct of Whereness has got into the very blood. Let me show how it works out.

'What shall we play?' cried a merry little maiden, bareheaded and barefooted, her golden hair fluttering in the breeze.

It has been a scorching Australian February day, and we were spending our midsummer holidays at Beechington. As soon as the fierce red sun sank into the sea a light wind sprang up, and the evening was delicious beyond description. We went for a stroll along the soft wet sands, and, passing the quaint old fisher-huts, sat down against the heavy wooden piles that supported the crazy old pier. The sea-front was more populous than usual. After the suffocating heat of the day, people were in no hurry to exchange the refreshing beach for bedrooms that would still be close and stuffy; and the children, who had been lounging about in the shade all day, begged for an extra hour. It had become too dark, however, for bathing and paddling; how should that extra hour be spent?

'What shall we play?' cried the merry little maiden,

perched on the summit of an enormous castle of sand. 'What shall we play?'

'Play hide-and-seek!' exclaimed her brother, giving her a push that left him in possession of the crumbling castle; and hide-and-seek it was.

And for the next half-hour we could just make out stealthy and spectral forms lurking behind the piles, creeping along the sand, and stealing into the dark recesses formed by the beginnings of the pier —the spans that were so low that you could step upon the woodwork from the sands.

Now what is the philosophy of this dance in the dusk? These merry young madcaps are tasting the sweetness of Whereness, that is all. They are deliberately losing each other in order that they may say to themselves, 'Where? Where? Where?' They love to lose and they love to find. Whereness and Thereness are the two hemispheres that make up their world; and there is an element of romance about the exploration and exploitation of each of them.

When these laughing little sand-urchins get a little older they will discover that the road from Whereness to Thereness is a longer one than they used to think. And they will find that life is one grand game of hide-and-seek.

'Where's Charlie?' they cry, as they dart in and out among the gloomy supports of the pier.

'I see him! There he is,' cries the merry little maiden whom we saw first on the castle of

sand. 'I see him! He's behind the bush on the bank.'

So swiftly, in childhood, do we make the great transition from Whereness to Thereness. Later on we find it a longer journey. The question, we discover, is not so easily answered.

'Where's Charlie?' we say, as they said it down by the pier. And in reply, somebody points to the hearthrug, where, to all appearances, Charlie lies sprawling, his head resting on his hands, his elbows buried in the rug, and his eyes riveted upon his book. It is Fenimore Cooper's *Pathfinder,* and, glancing over his shoulder, you can tell by the picture the stage that he has reached. The party are down at the Thousand Islands, and through the baseness and cupidity of Muir, they have been betrayed into the hands of the Iroquois. The beautiful Mabel Dunham is besieged in the blockhouse, having as her only companion the Dew of June, the wife of Arrowhead, the Indian chief; and on her friendship she cannot rely. She expects every moment to be her last. By arranging the bodies of the soldiers they have slain and scalped in hideously life-like postures, the savages have set the trap that, they hope, will decoy the remaining white men to their doom. The situation is dramatic and absorbing; the excitement is intense. Now the question is, *Where is Charlie?* It is absurd to say that he is sprawling on the hearth-rug. The fraction of him that is lying on the rug is inconsiderable. His body is

there, that is all. Charlie himself is out among the forts and forests of Lake Ontario. Clearly, then, the precise location of Charlie—or of anybody else—is not the simple matter that it seems.

Nancy, the gay little golden-haired romp whom you first saw perched defiantly on the summit of her castle of sand, is at this moment fast asleep in a dainty little room of her own in a comfortable city home. Come and peep at her! Here she is, her riot of golden curls all floating out over the snowy pillow! She is dreaming of Beechington. In her fancy she is back again among the sand-dunes and the seaweed; again she is splashing in the surf; once more she is building castles on the soft sand; and still again, she is darting in and out among the pillars of the pier. Now *where is Nancy?* Is she in bed or is she at Beechington? The question is a very intricate and complicated one.

Or look at this. Ian Maclaren tells us how General Carnegie brought his daughter home from India, the land in which she had been born, and introduced her to the family inheritance at Drumtochty. They inspected the lodge; they visited the tenantry; they rambled about the fields; and Kate was delighted with everything she saw. One day they sauntered along the banks of the stream into the primrosed woods. 'Kate laid her hand on the General's arm beneath an ancient beech, and they stood in silence to receive the blessing of the place; for surely never is the soul so open to the

voice of Nature as by the side of running water and in the heart of a wood. The fretted sunlight made shifting figures of brightness on the ground; above, the innumerable leaves rustled and whispered; a squirrel darted along a branch and watched the intruders with bright, curious eyes; the rooks cawed from the distance; the pigeons cooed in sweet, sad cadence close at hand. They sat down on the bare roots at their feet and yielded themselves to the genius of the forest.

' "Father," whispered Kate, after a while, as one wishing to share confidences, "where are you?"

'The General confessed that he was a boy again, fishing for trout in this very stream.

' "Ah me, Kit, what a day it was! And you, Kit, where are you?"

' "Oh, I was back in the convent with my nuns, and Sister Flora was trying to teach me English grammar in good French, and I was correcting her in bad French, and she begins to laugh because it is all so droll!" '

Where are you, father?

Where are you, Kit?

And although they are sitting side by side in the flowery woods, listening to the murmur of the stream, the one is away across the years and the other is away across the seas. It is the old problem of Whereness.

Where was Charlie when he seemed to be on the hearthrug?

Where was Nancy when she seemed to be in her cosy bed?

Where was the General? Where was Kate?

You will never convince me that Charlie himself was on the rug, that Nancy herself was in the bed, that Kate and her father were on the banks of the stream. You might as well attempt to persuade me that a man is in his grave because you happen to have laid his body there! No, no; the problem of Whereness is not solved as simply as that.

I admit that the location of the body may often prove an interesting and valuable clue to the whereabouts of the soul. Tell we *where* a man is, and you give me an idea as to *what* a man is. If you tell me that a certain man may usually be found of an evening in the taproom of the 'Blue Boar,' I cannot help forming certain conclusions concerning the man himself. If you tell me that the same man's son, unaffected by his father's influence and example, may be found any evening at the Technical School, preparing for an examination in electrical engineering, I involuntarily form a certain estimate of the boy's character. In each case I have rashly argued from the whereabouts of the body to the texture of the soul. Obviously the reasoning is inconclusive and unreliable. But it is so often safe that it presents a clue that the mind insists upon following; and only occasionally does the judgement find that trail illusive. When you tell me that a pair of distracted parents, who had for three days searched in

vain for their lost boy, found him at last in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, I can form an idea as to the kind of boy that that Boy is!

But I have not quite finished with Charlie, whom we saw on the hearthrug, and Nancy, whom we saw on the beach. We must follow them to school. Charlie is at Grafton House; Nancy at Haddington College.

'Now, Charlie,' says Dr. Bradley, the head master, 'when Columbus made his first great voyage across the Atlantic in 1492, where did he land?'

'In the East Indies, sir,' replies poor Charlie.

'In the East Indies!' repeats the doctor indignantly. 'Why, where's your geography, sir, where's your geography?'

Let us take a cab to Haddington College, and see how Nancy is getting on!

'Now, Nancy,' says Miss Corfield, 'what English general defeated the French at the battle of Blenheim in 1704?'

'The Duke of Wellington, miss,' stammers out poor little Nancy.

'Oh, Nancy,' replies the teacher reproachfully, 'where's your history? Where's your history?'

Now both at Grafton House and at Haddington College the teacher's *second* question is a much more difficult one to answer than the *first*.

'Where's your geography?'

'Where's your history?'

As soon as Charlie heard Fred Meldrum tell the doctor that it was in the West Indies that the great navigator landed, he distinctly remembered having read of the arrival at the Bahamas. As soon as Nancy heard Lucy Drummond mention the Duke of Marlborough's name, she vividly remembered the previous evening's home lesson? Yet where was Charlie's geography? Where was Nancy's history? Where? Where? Where?

There is a very similar story in the New Testament. It is the story of the storm on the lake. 'And they came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; and they ceased, and there was a calm. And He said unto them, Where is your faith?'

'Where is your geography?' asks Dr. Bradley.

'Where is your history?' asks Miss Corfield.

'Where is your faith?' asks the Greatest of All.

Where? Where? Where?

It is nothing that Charlie knows all about the landing at the Bahamas. He does not know where his knowledge is; he cannot put his hand upon it at the right time. '*Where* is your geography?'

It is nothing that Nancy knows all about the victor of Blenheim. She cannot instantly locate her knowledge and produce it when it is required. '*Where* is your history?'

It is nothing that I possess faith. The Master's question implies that the disciples also possessed it.

But they could not find it and use it when the storm broke upon them. '*Where* is your faith?'

A well-regulated mind is a mind that is stored with information, and that knows exactly where to find each of its innumerable treasures. A well-regulated soul is a soul richly endowed with faith, and that knows exactly where to find it when occasion for its use arrives.

IV

THE CONFESSIONAL

We were sitting round the fire, and I was reading aloud—a favourite amusement of ours. We were suddenly interrupted by the ringing of the front-door bell.

'You are wanted. It's a young woman; she says she won't come in. I think she's crying.'

I went to the door, and at first thought that our visitor had fled. But she was standing a step or two along the verandah, out of the light of the hall lamp. It was a miserable night, black as ink, with a high wind that was occasionally laden with sleet. I begged her to come in; but in vain. At last, with a thought, evidently, for myself, she faltered in this resolve of hers.

'Are you sure that all the blinds are down?' she asked.

I excused myself that I might make sure. Opening the study door, I lit the gas, saw to the blinds, and returned to bring her in. She slipped in furtively, as though pursued. I motioned her to the arm-chair; she threw herself into it, and, burying her face in her hands, burst into a tempest of tears.

I need not record the story that, on recovering

her voice, she unfolded to me. It has been written, sometimes very sternly and sometimes very tenderly, thousands of times since our little race began. At length she rose to go.

'But why,' I asked, 'did you come to *me?* Have we met before?

'No,' she replied, 'but I just had to speak at last. I felt that I had kept it to myself long enough, and that unless I told it all to somebody I should lose my reason or die!'

With the contrite and tearful confession that she made to me as she sat in the arm-chair I am not now concerned. Of that nothing will induce me to write. But this second confession, made upon her feet whilst preparing to leave, struck me as being intensely significant.

'I just had to speak. . . . I had kept it to myself long enough. . . . Unless I told it all to somebody, I should die!'

In those artless words she expressed a deep and irrepressible human instinct—the Instinct of the Confessional. It is worth thinking about.

I

The soul grows hungry as well as the body. At certain moments and in certain moods one side of my nature craves the Confessional, just as, at other moments and in other moods, another side of my nature craves the Cupboard. And the one set of

appetites is as vehement as the other. We all remember the thoughts that tortured us in childhood and youth. We were young explorers, and fresh continents burst on our horizon every day. The universe was a packet of stupendous surprises, and new astonishments were constantly breaking upon us. We were alternately fascinated and frightened. Like moths clinging to the wall, yet blinking at the light, we were magnetized by its dazzling splendour, yet we noticed that, in its lustre, stronger wings than ours were pitifully singed. We saw things, heard things, felt things, did things that threw us into a flutter of excitement, a torment of curiosity. Were we the richer or the poorer for such experiences? Was it wicked to feel as we had felt, to do as we had done? The uncertainty added a new poignancy to our mental anguish. It was then that we first longed for the Confessional—and found it.

Jean and Allan were sister and brother. Both were in the tumult of the teens. Each was feeling, in a vague, half-recognized, subconscious way, that hunger for the Confessional which I have just described, though neither, of course, had given a hint to the other, nor to any soul alive. The sea, they say, carries all its unrest upon the surface; in the depths there is the stillness of an everlasting calm. With Jean and Allan it was quite otherwise. The storm was raging in the depths; it was the surface that was unruffled. There came a certain evening—cold, frosty, but brilliantly moonlit—on which Mr.

Bannister had an engagement at Lennington, two or three miles away.

'Are you going to walk, dad?' asked Allan.

'Yes,' replied Mr. Bannister. 'Why?'

'I've finished my home-work. Let me come with you and carry your bag.'

They were soon striding along the road together. The glow of the exercise and the beauty of the night threw Allan into a garrulous mood. He talked of lessons, he talked of sports, he felt that he could talk of everything. The misty autumn moonlight seemed to have unlocked his soul, and he found himself again and again on the verge of the problems that had so often puzzled him. And then he made the plunge; asked question after question; and was surprised that his father was not angry. Encouraged by such sympathy and counsel, Allan told his father everything, and was astonished at his own temerity.

'Dad's a brick!' Allan said to himself that night as, with a great contentment in his heart, he tumbled into bed. And, forty years afterwards, he was just as thankful for the discoveries of that memorable night. For in the course of that moonlight walk to Lennington Allan had found the Confessional.

But whilst Allan and his father had been awakening the frosty echoes of that country road, what had happened at home? After accompanying her husband and her boy to the great hall-door, and watching them vanish down the path, Mrs. Bannister

had made her way to the sitting-room, where Jean soon joined her.

'Oh, mum, what a lovely fire! It's a shame to light the gas; we'll just sit here and talk!' and she threw herself on the hearthrug with her elbow on her mother's lap and her head resting on her hand.

Mrs. Bannister was a wise woman, and she humoured her daughter's whim. They talked, first of one thing and then of another, until Jean too felt the craving for the Confessional sweeping over her soul. And in the flickering firelight she spoke of the things that had so sorely perplexed her. When Allan and his father returned, Jean was in bed and asleep. But before she slept she had knelt in her pretty room and, among her thanksgivings, had expressed her pride and gladness in having such a mother! For that night she too had discovered the Confessional.

II

The Confessional is a very sacred place. No man can afford to make it commonplace. The man who is always talking about his sins, and who talks of them to everybody, is like the dog that licks the hand of every passer-by and will follow any one who strokes him. There is something wrong with him, and he will be of little use to anybody. Faith has her frugalities. 'Take heed,' said the ancient mandate, 'take heed that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest!' The Jew who

laid a dead lamb on any cairn that he happened to pass, turned the offering into refuse and the stones into a rubbish-heap. But the Jew who had but one altar, and brought his offering to it, made of the lamb a sacrifice and of the stones a shrine. No man has a right to turn every cupboard into a confessional-box, every chance acquaintance into a father-confessor. 'A man with any self-respect will not be anxious to confess his sins,' says Mark Rutherford in *Catherine Furze*. 'If he be completely ashamed of them, he will hold his tongue about them. But,' he goes on to say, 'the perfect wife may know them. She will not love him the less; he will love her the more as the possessor of his secrets, and the consciousness of her knowledge of him and of them will strengthen and often, perhaps, save him.' A healthy man will feel no desire to confess himself to a mob, much less will he yearn to unburden his soul to a machine. The Confessional can never become a mechanical affair. There come moments when a man feels that he must speak or perish. 'I just had to speak at last,' sobbed the girl in my study. 'I felt that I had kept it to myself long enough, and that, unless I told it all to somebody, I should lose my reason or die!' At such a time and in such a mood the use of the Confessional is like cold water to a fevered tongue. But to make the Confessional mechanical and mandatory—whatever the circumstances and whatever the mood—would outrage the finest instincts and the truest delicacies of the soul.

Old Patrick Brontë, the father of the three famous sisters, tried to establish such a Confessional in the Rectory at Haworth. 'When my children were very young,' he tells us, 'I thought that perhaps they knew more than I had yet disscovered. In order to make them speak to me with less timidity, I deemed that if they were put behind a sort of mask I might gain my end; and, happening to have a mask in the house, I told them all to stand and speak boldly from under cover of the mask.' But, as readers of Mrs. Gaskell's great biography know, it was not a success. A mechanical Confessional can never be a success. The most sacred exercises of the soul are never performed by rule of thumb.

III

But we must have a picture or two. My reference to Patrick Brontë reminds me of his daughter Charlotte. She shall paint the first. In *Villette* she tells us of Lucy Snow. Poor Lucy is an English governess in Belgium. She is sick and miserable and dreadfully lonely. She hears the bells; enters the old church; finds that the service is over, but that many of the worshippers are lingering, waiting for confession. A craving to confess came over Lucy. A pale lady kneeling near her said in a low, kind voice, 'Go you now; I am not quite prepared.' Mechanically obedient, she rose and went. To take such a step, she reflected, could not make her more

miserable; it might soothe. She says: 'The priest within the confessional never turned his eye to regard me; he only quietly inclined his ear to my lips. He might be a good man, but this duty had become to him a sort of form; he went through it with a phlegm of custom. I hesitated; of the formula of confession I was ignorant; instead of commencing with the usual prelude I said, *"Mon Père je suis Protestante."* He inquired, not unkindly, why, being a Protestant, I came to him. I told him I was perishing for a word of advice and comfort. I had been living alone for weeks, had been ill, and had a pressure of affliction on my mind of which it would hardly any longer endure the weight. "Was it a sin, a crime?" he asked, somewhat startled. I assured him on that point, and gave him an outline of my experience. He looked surprised and puzzled, and said, "You take me unawares. I have not had such a case as yours. Ordinarily we know our routine. On no account would I lose sight of you. Go, my daughter, for the present, but return again to me." Of course, I had not expected more. But the mere relief of communication in an ear which was human and sentient, yet consecrated, had done me good. I was already solaced, and I returned to him no more.'

Now this is very suggestive; and side by side with Charlotte Brontë's picture of the church in Belgium I propose to lay Ian Maclaren's picture of Dr. Davidson's study. After telling us of the reverence

with which the very furniture of this quiet room is regarded in every home in Drumtochty, Ian Maclaren goes on to say that 'here the doctor consults with the factor about some improvement in the arrangements of the little commonwealth; he takes counsel with a farmer about his new lease, and promises to say a good word to his lordship; he confirms the secret resolution of some modest, gifted lad to study for the holy ministry; he hears the shamefaced confession of some lassie whom love has led astray; he gives good advice to a son leaving the glen for the distant dangerous world; he comforts the mother who has received bad news from abroad. Generations have come in their day to this room, and generations still unborn will come in their joys and sorrows, with their trials and their affairs, while the manse stands and human life runs its old course.' The Doctor has seen three generations arise in Drumtochty, so that 'the manse has become another word for guidance and good cheer. In their poor little perplexity about a new place Jean advises Jock to "slip down an' see the Doctor," and Jock, although appearing to refuse, does "gie a cry at the manse," and comes home to the gudewife mightily comforted.'

'I was solaced, and returned no more,' says Lucy Snow of that Belgian Confessional.

'Jock returned to the gudewife mightily comforted,' says Ian Maclaren of that Confessional at Drumtochty.

Anybody who glances at these two pictures will feel that they go well together.

IV

Now these two pictures represent the two greatest reverences of which the human soul is capable—the reverence for *Authority* and the reverence for *Affection.*

The people whom we saw in the Belgian church really believe that the priest to whom they are about to confess has the power to absolve them; and they reverence the awful Authority with which they credit him.

The people whom we saw in Dr. Davidson's study really believe that the old minister is very fond of them, and they reverence the beautiful Affection that all his behaviour displays.

In the one picture I see the human reverence for Authority, not necessarily accompanied by Affection. In the other picture I see the human reverence for an Affection that makes no pretence to special Authority.

But there are times in my poor soul's history when I feel that I need, not the one, nor the other, but *both.* I hunger for the voice of Authority and I hunger for the voice of Love. And when I hunger for it, I hear it! For listen!—

'The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins!'—I need no Authority greater than that!

'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost!'—I can never hope to hear of greater Love!

In His Presence, therefore, do I bow myself in lowliest contrition. In His great word of absolution I catch the accents of an Authority that is absolute and of an Affection that is stronger than death. Like Lucy Snow, leaving the Belgian church, I am greatly solaced; and, like the gudeman leaving Dr. Davidson's study, I am mightily comforted. For have I not been to the fountainhead, to that great source of all Authority and all Affection of which the Belgian church and the Scottish study were but dim reflections? I have found the Highest Confessional, and, having found it, my soul is filled with a deep, a lasting and unutterable content.

V

OUR LEFT LUGGAGE

John Broadbanks is determined that bygones shall never be bygones. In season and out of season, he revives the memory of my early transgression, and only this morning I received a letter from him in which he makes a pointed reference to his favourite theme. As far as I can remember—for a vast amount of water has flowed under the bridge since the offence was committed—the circumstances were these. I had been for several days the guest of John and Lilian at their manse at Silverstream, and was expecting to stay there until the end of the week. But a message arrived from Mosgiel to say that I was wanted, and my visit came abruptly to a close. I went to my room to pack my bag; John proceeded to the stable to harness Brownie. Half-an-hour later we were admiring the heavy crops on either side of the road, whilst Gyp was having great sport among the rabbits that popped in and out of the hedge.

Next morning I received a facetious little note from Lilian. Had I, when I entered the room to pack my bag, gone to sleep instead? Or had I, in my enthusiasm for travelling light, carried my bag

home empty? She had found a toothbrush and a strop in the bedroom, a half-read novel on the window-sill on the verandah, a fountain-pen on the table in the dinning-room, a coat hanging in the hall, together with several other miscellaneous trifles that belonged neither to John nor to herself. Would I send a carrier's cart for the luggage I had left behind me? or had I any alternative proposal? Whenever, during the years that followed, I visited the Silverstream manse, the entire establishment was most ostentatiously searched before I was permitted to depart. And, as I have already indicated, John's correspondence shows that my slipshod transport of so many years ago is still remembered against me.

And yet it is a case of much ado about nothing. It seemed remarkable at the time. I felt terribly ashamed of myself. I remember the confusion with which, when next I met her, I looked into Lilian's face. It seemed the most consummate stupidity to have left my miscellaneous belongings scattered all over the manse. But Time, the healer of all wounds and the teacher of all wisdom, has soothed my agitation and brought me wondrous comfort. The years have passed; I have kept my eyes wide open; and I have noticed that no guest ever takes his departure from the home that has so kindly sheltered him without shedding a great deal of his property in the process. It is impossible. I see now that I escaped lightly. A toothbrush and a strop, a novel and

an overcoat—what of such trifles? The man who merely omits such baubles from his kit must be regarded as something of an expert in the art of packing-up. Over none of these knick-knacks did I heave a single sigh; but many a time since have I shed bitter tears, after taking farewell of a place, at the thought of the things I had left behind me.

When I was a very small boy my nurse used to amuse herself by asking me a riddle. I am not good at riddles; but practice makes perfect; and she asked this one so often that I could generally cover myself with glory by returning the correct answer. 'What,' she would inquire, 'does every one leave on his bed when he comes from his room in the morning?' As soon as nurse fired this conundrum at me I knew the time had come to say 'An impression!' and to be overwhelmed with flattering references to my brilliant and promising intellectual qualities. As a matter of fact, I did not then know what an impression was; but I have found out since.

I have found out, too, that the reference to the bed was quite unnecessary. The bed is not the only place on which we leave impressions. We emerge from our rooms in the morning leaving impressions on the beds, and then we pass through the day leaving impressions everywhere else. We leave impressions in the breakfast-room, impressions in the dining-room, impressions in the work-room, impressions everywhere! Some of them

are good impressions, some of them are bad impressions, some of them are true impressions, some of them are false impressions; but good or bad or true or false, there they are!

A friend of mine in New Zealand is stone deaf. He is one of the most attractive and delightful men that I have met; but he is handicapped by this severe affliction. 'I sometimes wonder,' he writes, 'what people who do not know of my infirmity think of me. Occasionaly I get a hint. Recently, on the golf-links, a gentleman said to a friend, "That is a gruff and glum old customer I passed on the hill up there! I said good-day to him twice and he never took any notice!" His friend explained to him who I was and that I was deaf. The same thing happens everywhere. I sit silent at dinner in the hotel, I travel in silence in the railway-train. I stand aloof from every conversation. I seem to people to be a reserved, moody, morose, grumpy old fellow. They do not know that I am deaf.' This struck me as being very pathetic. The deafness is bad enough, in all conscience. But for so lovable a man to be doomed to go through life leaving *such* impressions everywhere! What is a matter of a fountain-pen or an overcoat compared with this?

And yet, whilst I pity him, I envy him. I do not, of course, covet the deafness that he suffers nor the impression that he leaves. But I envy him the satisfaction that he derives from knowing that the impressions that he laments are false impres-

sions. He knows—cannot help knowing,—that he is a far better man than casual observers suppose him to be. I have myself shed many tears over the impressions—the ugly and unfortunate impressions—I have left behind me; but, in contrast with the sorrow of my deaf friend, the poignancy of my grief has invariably consisted in the consciousness that the impressions I had left behind me were true and just impressions. I was as bad as the people thought, or even worse; *that* was the pity of it!

Life holds few sadnesses greater than the sadness of leaving places; and the sadness of leaving places consists very largely in the contemplation of the impressions we are leaving in them. I suppose that few of us can leave even a boarding-house or a holiday home without deep emotion. Every possible circumstance may conspire to speed your departure. You have been very uncomfortable there; you have been badly treated; the weather has been unkind; you are delighted at the prospect of very soon finding yourself at home. Yet when the time for departure actually arrives, and the train is moving out of the station, the mind is tormented by a score of memories that merge in one great and overpowering regret. You think ruefully of the things you are leaving behind you. Your strop and your toothbrush, your fountain-pen and your overcoat, may be securely packed; but there are the impressions, the unhappy and ineradicable impressions! You recall the irritation that you showed when the demands of

the cabman were so obviously extortionate; you remember the vexation you betrayed when, arriving back, as hungry as a hunter, from your long walk over the cliffs, the dinner was cold, unsavoury, and insipid; you are tortured by the thought of the needless heat that you imported into a debate at table. Opportunities of making the other boarders a little less uncomfortable, or of assisting them to a little more enjoyment, rush back upon the memory; but it is too late; the chance has gone for ever; and an impression of selfishness or surliness is left behind! All this after a week's stay in an inhospitable boarding-house! How much more overwhelming must be the emotion with which we leave the people with whom we have been happily associated through the long laborious years! The train tears us away, and, in a tempest of tears, we think of what might have been. The impressions we have left here, there, and everywhere! 'Think of me at my best!' said Steerforth, in taking farewell of David Copperfield. It is a tacit recognition of the fact that there were *other* things of which he wished David to think no more, impressions that he would wish to be obliterated for ever. It is those *other* things that invariably torture us when the last good-bye has been said. We are in the grip of three pitiless tyrants.

We are experiencing the tyranny of *Pride*—it wounds our vanity to think of the things that lower us in the opinion of other people. We love to be loved.

We are experiencing the tyranny of *Time*—the days have come and gone; there are no back moves in the game; the impressions have been made and must remain.

We are experiencing the tyranny of *Conscience*—we have done the thing that we ought not to have done, and have left undone the thing that we ought to have done, and the inward monitor overwhelms us with secret retribution.

My absent-minded behaviour at the Silverstream manse brought the colour to my cheek when I next met Lilian on the street; but a matter of strops and toothbrushes, novels and overcoats, could never have delivered me into the clutches of such terrible tyrants as these!

But let us strike a cheerier note. For, when all is said and done, the most lovable people on the planet are the people who know how to leave things behind them. One of those days I shall be invited to a public dinner. I feel it in my bones. The master of ceremonies will ask me to propose a toast, but, in his excitement, he will forget to tell me the precise nature of the toast that he wishes me to submit. I shall find myself with a free hand, and my course will be clear. For, with all the confidence in life, I shall ask the company to drink to the health of 'The Man Who Leaves Things Behind Him.' 'Gentlemen,' I shall say, in the course of a speech that will attract more attention than any other oration delivered that evening, 'Gentlemen,

I propose the toast of the man who can leave things behind him! You all know him—and love him. He never keeps up things. He never brings forward the arrears of yesterday's grudges and enters them conspicuously at the head of to-day's accounts. He has learned the divine art of forgetting.'

Having opened the speech with these telling and effective sentences, I shall be guided by the nature of my audience as to the manner of my procedure. If it is a university dinner, I shall feel it incumbent upon me to make some recondite allusion to the classics, in which case I shall probably call Marcus Aurelius to my aid. 'Let the wrong which is done by a man,' said that empurpled philosopher, 'stay where the wrong is done.' It was an emperor's way of saying that there are some things that should be left behind us.

Or, if the dinner is of a more popular character, shall probably quote from Mr. C. J. Dennis. Like Bill, we have all fallen in love with Doreen. Who does not remember the occasion on which, a sharp axe having been left out of place, the baby stumbled over it and cut himself? Poor Doreen, scared at the freely flowing blood on baby's hands and clothes, charges Bill with carelessness in having left the dangerous implement lying about. Bill denies it, and, resenting the imputation, declares that he doesn't care who left it there. A storm follows, ending in a soft shower of tears. Let Bill tell how it ended:

I sees the tears is near,
An' pats 'er 'air. 'Now, let it drop,' I sez. 'Don't worry, dear.'
''Ow can I let it drop?' she sobs. 'You said you didn't care
'Oo left it there.'

This is more than Bill can stand, and he is melted to contrition. The blood on baby's hand, and the tears in Doreen's eyes, are too much for him. Fancy saying that he didn't care!

'I do!' I yells. 'I mean—I don't—I . . .' O Gaw spare me days!
When you argue wiv a woman she 'as got you either ways!
You 'ave to do it in the end; an' so I licks the dirt,
An' sez, 'Dear, I apologize. I'm sorry—if I 'urt.'
Yes, I'm married to a woman. An' she smiles, and strokes me 'air,
An'—leaves it there.

That's it—*'leaves it there!'* Doreen was of that lovable order of saintly souls who know how to leave things behind them. I rather fancy that, whatever the character of the banquet, this speech will be a distinct success, and that at its close, the toast will be received with considerable enthusiasm, perhaps even with musical honours.

Looking back on that early experience at Silverstream, I find that the years have softened my shame. I hope, one of these days, to meet Lilian again, but it will be without confusion. We shall laugh together at my old-time stupidity. The only thing I regret, as I review the circumstances to-day, is that she found the novel lying open on the

window-sill and the fountain-pen left on the table. That was very untidy. I have spent my life in going from place to place, and in leaving things behind me; but it is painful to reflect that I left some of them in confusion and disorder. I do not wish to acquire so repulsive a habit. For, one great day, I shall take a nobler journey still. I shall set out, not for another country, but for another world. I shall leave lots and lots of things behind me; I hope they will all be shipshape and tidy. 'I have not left even a pair of gloves out of place,' said George Whitefield, when he went to bed at night. 'If I die in the dark, all my affairs, for time and for eternity, are in perfect order.' At just about the same time—on March 19, 1747—Whitefield's illustrious friend, John Wesley, was making a notable entry in his Journal. 'I considered,' he writes, 'what I would do if I were sure that I had but two days to live. All outward things are settled to my wish. The properties are safe; the deeds are in the hands of the trustees. My will is made. What have I more to do but to commend my soul to my merciful and faithful Creator?' These two stalwart souls—George Whitefield and John Wesley—carried to the point of absolute perfection the science of our left luggage.

VI

THE GARDEN OF ALLAH

'We go to the Garden of Allah!' say the Arabs as they strike their tents, rearrange their merchandise, and set off with their camels into the desert.

I too have been to the Garden of Allah. It has been one of the great experiences of my life. In my time I have been surrounded by toppling icebergs in the Southern Ocean; have felt the fury of a blizzard off Cape Horn; have watched the splendours of a tropical thunderstorm as it shattered the glassy tranquillity of equatorial seas; and have gazed upon landscapes of exquisite beauty and appalling terror. But this was an experience quite new to me. I have now seen the camels, as, out in the endless solitudes, they patiently pursue their way or toil at their appointed tasks; I have seen the taunting mirage as, with a cruel assurance of genuineness and reality, it spreads its glowing illusions along the far horizon; I have seen the blacks gather round the train and stare at the astounding impertinences of civilization.

It was a novel experience to run on for more than a thousand miles without picking up or setting down a single passenger. The scream of the engine

seemed almost a sacrilege as it broke upon the silence of the centuries. There is, as somebody has said, a fascination about the desert at least as great as the fascination of the forest. 'For three hundred miles the line runs without a curve. You look back, and the shining rails run on towards infinity till they seem to meet in the dim distance. You look forward, and see the same twin threads drawn out till they melt into one another. Elsewhere there is nothing but the desert and the sky. The desert rolls away to just such a circular horizon as the voyager by water sees when out of sight of land. By day the sun blazes in a heaven of cloudless blue or flecked at most by a few white clouds. Beneath it sleeps the circle of earth, unbroken by hill or valley, by tree or house, or by any of those things that we look for in ordinary landscapes. By day the sun's light floods the shadeless plain, and by night the moon and the stars blaze forth with a brightness not seen in moister climates; and, under the moonlight, the bluish-white and grey green of the bluebush and saltbush look even more unearthly and ghostlike than by day.' I am glad to have made friends with the desert. I am glad to have spent a few days in the Garden of Allah.

I

The Garden of Allah, I find, is a very *luxurious* place. Until I plunged into the desert, I always thought of it as a barren waste, an arid, sterile

wilderness, a place in which no flowers bloom, in which no birds sing, and in which no fruits flourish. It does look like it just at first. But that is only Nature's modesty. The best things often masquerade; they indulge in camouflage; they wear sackcloth over their silk that we may not suspect their true dignity and worth. The desert pretends to be an empty and desolate place. To the casual observer it looks terribly barren and void—a patch of grey-green saltbush here, a splash of ghostly bluebush there, a stunted acacia struggling for dear life over yonder. But, when you know the desert better, you are no longer deceived. 'There was a man once, a poet,' says Mr. Maarten Maartens. 'He went wandering through the streets of the city, and he met a disciple. "Come out with me for a walk in the sand-dunes," said the poet, and they went. But ere they had progressed many stages, the disciple said, "There is nothing here but sand!" "To what did I invite you?" asked the poet. "To a walk in the sand-dunes," replied the disciple. "Then," said the poet, "do not complain. Yet, even so, your words are untrue. *There is heaven above!* Do you not see it?" ' Precisely! Those who have visited the 'Garden of Allah,' as I have just done, know exactly what Mr. Maarten Maartens means.

'There is heaven above!' That is the glory of the Garden of Allah. Heaven is stripped bare. You may live in city or in country, but you will never see heaven as you see it in the desert. If you dwell

in a city street, you may occasionally lift up your eyes, but, even if you do, only a narrow ribbon of smoky sky will meet your tired gaze. Heaven is huddled behind the houses. Or, if you build your home among the mountains or the trees those very mountains and trees will blot out the vision of the stars. But out in the Garden of Allah the immense vault above you is unsmudged by smoke and unscreened by a single intervening object. I had to go into the Garden of Allah to learn what the Prophet meant by exclaiming, in calling the captives into the Wilderness, 'Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their hosts by number. He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might.' In the desert the stars are everywhere! They are above you and around you, and almost beneath you. They come right down to the level of your feet. One of our poets has declared that we are nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth. That is so, especially in the Garden of Allah.

In the Garden of Allah you can only look in two directions. Since there is nothing around you, you must needs gaze upon the heavens above or upon the earth beneath. If, then, instead of looking above you at the naked heavens, you cast your eyes upon the equally bare earth, you are peering into a world of wonders. 'There is nothing here but sand!' complained the disciple of the poet in Mr. Maarten Maartens' parable. It is not true, as we have al-

ready seen. But even if it were true, is there really matter for complaint? *Nothing but sand!* And is not the sand wonderful enough? Take a handful of it, and let it filter through your fingers until only one tiny grain is left. And now what have you? Ruskin has written a book on *The Ethics of the Dust,* in which he has shown that this grain of sand that lies in the palm of your hand is a palace built of crystals. Each of these glittering crystals has the power of reflecting, not only the blue rays, but the blue, green, purple, and red rays in the greatest beauty in which they can be seen through any hard material whatever. This grain of sand that you hold so lightly in your hand is an opal in the making. From it are formed the onyx, the chrysolite, the agate, the beryl, the cornelian, the chalcedony, the jasper, the sardius, and the amethyst. And this is only one of innumerable millions and billions and trillions of similar grains scattered across the desert.

We have an ugly habit of regarding one miracle as marvellous, but a million miracles as commonplace. If, once in a century, the almond, the hawthorn, or the gorse sprang to life again, people would flock from every corner of the globe to behold the miracle. But because every springtime every tree bursts into tender leaf and delicate flower, we see nothing extraordinary in it. We do not see the tree for the forest. But this sort of thing will not do. If one snowdrop is really wonderful, the whole pageant of the vernal season only multiplies the

marvel a million million-fold. If one tiny grain of sand is so glorious, what shall I say of the desert? 'There is,' says a philosopher, 'just one pleasaunce on earth, and that is a garden.' To be sure! Look which way you will, and you will feel with me that the Garden of Allah is an amazingly luxurious place.

II

The Garden of Allah, I find, is a very *melodious* place. I used to think that the desert was the home of all the silences. But I know better now. And I find that I am not alone in making this discovery. All who come back from the Garden of Allah tell of the voices that they heard there. A traveller who not long ago returned from the great deserts of the Soudan declares that he heard the sands singing softly to themselves in the sunset. This singular phenomenon, on which Sir George Adam Smith also comments, is said to be caused by the contraction of the grains of sand in the sudden cool of the evening. But, explain it as you will, the fact remains. And all the way across the Garden of Allah, whilst I sadly missed the songs of the birds to which I had listened with delight in other gardens, I was entertained by this most curious minstrelsy.

The desert sang to me the Songs of Long Ago! And very captivating songs they were. Go out into the Garden of Allah, and pull up a handful of salt-bush or bluebush. Then go a few inches deeper,

and you will find the limestone. Indeed, every here and there, fragments of broken limestone, looking like lumps of quartz, lie loosely about on the surface. Here is a Song of Long Ago. It tells me that where this screaming engine of ours now rushes on great whales and other monsters of the deep once disported themselves. The limestone is a mass of seashells; in many places the earth is still as salt as the sea-bed. What is it that Tennyson sings?

> There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
> O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
> There, where the long street roars, hath been
> The stillness of the central sea.

I need alter only a word or two and these well-known lines will fit precisely this music of the desert.

And then I thought that the desert, tiring of its song of old geologic ages, sang me a song of Yesterday. It was a song of the pioneers, the path-finders, the overlanders, a song of the men who blazed the trail:

> For what of the fellows who boldly faced
> Famine and drought on this dreadful track,
> Limning a path through an unknown waste,
> Edging and inching their way out-back?
>
> Where, even now, in a gilded car
> We roll at ease over restful miles,
> They limped their way to the goal afar—
> Forrest and Warburton, Eyre and Giles!

They tramped the desert with faces grim,
And nerves of iron and hearts of gold—
And if it happened that hope grew dim,
'Tis a tale that none of their lips have told.

As our luxurious cars rolled comfortably on, my fancy pictured for me the forms of those first pathfinders, everlastingly plodding on through the desert and the scrub. Again and again I raised my hat to their imperishable memory. Only to think of Edward Eyre! It was in 1841 that that dauntless pathfinder conceived the daring project of crossing this continent from sea to sea. He would turn his back upon the little patch of civilization in the eastern extremity of Australia, and would press on until he reached the seafront on the far west. He had already undertaken one or two minor expeditions with no very marked success, but he was one of those men whom failure only goads to still greater enterprise. He made little fuss; he said scarcely anything of his intention; he took into his confidence one or two comrades whose assistance or companionship he desired; he quietly collected his remarkably modest equipment; and then, without farewell or demonstration of any kind, he set out upon his tremendous and hazardous undertaking.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the fortitude and endurance which marked that famous journey. The heat was much more intense, the desert much more forbidding, and the pests much more fatal than Eyre had thought possible. Among his first ex-

periences he found himself pressing across burning sands without water, his horses almost mad with thirst. His companions advised return. He argued that they knew to their cost the terrors behind them, and he tried to persuade them that it was safer to go on. Then came a spell of five days without water. The horses had to be securely fastened to prevent them from rushing to the sea to quench their thirst. The plea for a return was renewed; only to be met by the same contention. 'Had they enjoyed the desert so much that they must needs recross it?' Baxter urged return; but Eyre knew only one word, and that word was 'forward!'

Then came the mutiny. The natives shot Baxter, and decamped with everything worth taking. 'The horrors of my situation,' says the explorer, 'glared upon me with startling reality. At dead of night, in the wildest wastes of Australia, I was left with but one native boy for a companion, and upon his fidelity I could not rely. For aught I knew he might be in league with the others, who were possibly lurking about with a view of taking my life, as they had taken Baxter's. Ages can never efface from my brain the horrors of that awful night, nor would the wealth of the world tempt me to go through it again.' Eyre persisted in his westward journey until, reduced to a skeleton and at his last gasp, he suddenly sighted a vessel out at sea, a French whaler. Captain Rossiter took the exhausted pathfinder on board, and would have carried him

to port. But Eyre revolted at the idea. He would accept only a few days' hospitality. Then, refreshed, he insisted on being set down exactly where he had been taken up, and, turning his face once more to the west, he heroically finished his tramp—the first man to cross the continent of Australia! This song the desert was singing in honour of the pathfinders, and I, for one, was glad to listen to its music.

And I thought that the desert was singing a Song of the Golden Age that is coming. For the day of the desert is only dawning. Every year, under scientific treatment, we take great tracts of barren desert and turn them into fruitful fields. Here in Australia it has been found possible to plough vast spaces which a few years ago were looked upon as dusty wastes. Enormous crops are harvested in districts that only yesterday were a wild and howling wilderness. It is so everywhere. Even the Sahara, which has been regarded as the natural emblem of sterility, has been found to possess broad plateaux and extensive valleys offering huge fertile areas to enterprising cultivators and pastoralists. Again, Major C. W. C. Marr, M.C., stated only the other day that, as a result of the British occupation of Mesopotamia, the deserts of that strange and silent land are now waving fields of wheat, oats, and barley. The British army advanced across deserts that had not grown a blade of grass since the days of Abraham; they left behind them waving crops of corn! I could see that the same was true here.

Round a hut near a water-bore a railway worker had planted a garden, and no garden in Australia could be more luxurious. A desert is a garden that has not yet been cultivated, that is all. Perhaps the same holds true of every arid soil, of every barren life! I heard the desert singing blithely of the great days coming. 'The desert shall rejoice,' cried the Prophet; 'the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God!' These are the things of which the sands are singing! An astonishingly melodious place is the Garden of Allah!

III

Most surprising of all, the Garden of Allah is, I find, an exceedingly *populous* place. Sir George Adam Smith says that the singing and the crackling of the sands at night have led all Bedouin peoples to fancy that the desert is haunted. They believe that the wilderness swarms with jinns and demons innumerable. Sir George quotes Musil as saying that a great Arab tribe on the eastern border of Moab hears at night in the desert all sorts of voices, and the tribesmen declare that female spirits appear every evening, playing on tambourines, beating drums, and performing weird, unearthly dances.

Sir George once asked one of his servants, a Syrian, to draw some water for him after dark from a cistern in the desert of Judea. 'He excused himself, and when I insisted he trembled. "What," I said, "do you fear? You will see nothing there." "It is not what I shall see, but what I *cannot* see, that I fear," he replied. I knew what he was thinking. He was afraid that the unseen spirits might crowd and hustle him into the water, as he bent over it to draw!' Here is a sinister suspicion attaching to the wilderness. The trail of the serpent was over the Garden of Eden. Do fiends and furies lurk in the Garden of Allah?

I do not know! Several scraps of evidence certainly point in that direction. My New Testament contains a dramatic and terrible record of One who was driven *into the desert* to be tempted of the devil. And a few pages farther on, I read of an unclean spirit which roamed *in desert places* seeking rest and finding none. And passing on, I remember the story of Saint Anthony. To escape the flaunting temptations of the great city of Alexandria, Saint Anthony fled to the deserts beyond the Nile and founded the first order of hermits. But he returned from those awful solitudes, and, when asked why he had forsaken his lonely cave, he sadly shook his head. 'The temptations of the silent desert,' he said, 'are even more terrible than those of the gay and bustling city!'

No; I do not know! I only know for certain that

there are angels in the Garden of Allah; for, in the sacred record to which I have referred, I am told that 'angels came and ministered unto Him.' That is the loveliness of life. Where the night is darkest He sets His brightest stars. Where the black clouds hang most gloomily He throws His radiant rainbow right athwart them. And when my pathway leads me to some inhospitable place in which men tell me that I shall hear the mutterings of demons, there, invariably, angels come and minister to me!

IV

And so I have returned from the Garden of Allah! I can never forget the discoveries that I made amidst its vastnesses. I discovered there that the lands and the lives that, to outward seeming, appear most barren, may be made to yield a most bounteous and wealthy fruitage. I discovered that the apparent poverty of life may be a clever ruse to conceal its immeasureable treasure, just as the covering of sackcloth may hide the richest silks and satins. I discovered that, if only my ears are not too heavy, I may catch, breaking from the most sombre silence, life's very sweetest songs. And I discovered that, in those grim and desolate places that seem to shelter the darkest powers of hell, I may suddenly come upon the shining hosts of heaven. In what garden, other than the Garden of Allah, could I have gathered flowers like these?

PART II

I

GAMMON AND SPINACH

'WHAT a refreshing set of humbugs we are, to be sure, ain't we, my sweet child?' So spake the diminutive and facetious Miss Mowcher in the process of being introduced to David Copperfield. 'What a refreshing set of humbugs we are, to be sure! And what a world of gammon and spinach this is, ain't it?'

Little Miss Mowcher's observations have, I must admit, a sinister sound; but for all that there is something very suggestive about them. For, her contemptuous references notwithstanding, there is something to be said for gammon and spinach! Gammon and spinach make up a very tasty dish. In the old days, when our grandfathers sat in the chimney-corners and overhauled a world into which no telegram, no steamship, no motor-car, no aeroplane had ever come, gammon and spinach was a very highly esteemed item on the menu of an English countryside. And, indeed, it is still to be had at some of those delightfully dreamy and old-fashioned inns at which one arrives, to his rapture, about once in a blue moon.

The gammon, as any dictionary will tell you, is

a savoury piece of bacon, the delicate and pungent flavours of which are intensified and enhanced by the succulent vegetable that invariably keeps it company. 'A world of gammon and spinach!' exclaimed little Miss Mowcher, with a knowing wink. How the phrase escaped from the cookery book into the less attractive vocabulary from which Miss Mowcher extracted it, I cannot imagine. But in a world like this we must take things as we find them. Miss Mowcher found gammon and spinach in disrepute. She found the words, and she employed them, not as denoting pork from the farmyard and greens from the garden, but as suggesting certain forms of artifice and imposition. 'What a refreshing set of humbugs we are, and what a world of gammon and spinach this is!' Very well, let it go at that! I shall not be turned from my purpose. I have undertaken to defend gammon and spinach, and I shall not forsake my clients because they happen to have fallen into ill odour. Let it be granted that we each possess infinite powers of deception, even of self-deception. Is this a just cause for lamentation? I fancy that I can prove that there is something very amiable about this peculiar faculty of ours. I submit that the very fact that we each possess it affords prima-facie evidence that we each have some use for it. And if we each have some use for it, and have each been endowed with it, it is difficult to see in its possession or exercise any sufficient cause for shame. Men were deceivers ever, and it is a very

good thing for us all that they were. Depend upon it, there is nothing very much wrong with gammon and spinach!

Let us plunge into the very heart of our subject straight away; we will mount the summit at a bound. It will be agreed that the climax of deception is self-deception. He is a very clever rogue who can pick his own pocket without noticing the theft; he is a remarkably skilful conjurer who can manipulate his hands so swiftly and so cunningly as to deceive his own eye and leave his brain bewildered! But it is possible, and, every day of our lives, it is done! We have the power to do it, and we should scarcely possess that power unless it held for us some pleasant and wholesome uses. It does.

In dealing with such a theme, a man can only argue with confidence from his own experience. I confess frankly that I have often deceived myself, and have got a great deal of fun out of it. May I indulge in a couple of reminiscences? To begin with, a memory of my early days comes back to me. As a boy in the early teens, I attended a number of evening classes. One of them was held in a remote part of the town, and involved me in a long and lonely walk home late at night. I do not know if I was more nervous than most boys at that age; but I know how I hated that walk. It led through a deep and thickly wooded valley, the trees arched overhead and made all kinds of fantastic shapes against the sky. Then I had to cross a churchyard;

I can feel the chill terror of it to this hour; shall I ever forget the night when a black cat, whisking suddenly out from behind a tombstone, so startled me that I was unable for some moments to proceed? And then, last of all, I had to make my way down a long straight road at the bottom of which we lived. In this road there were twenty-eight lamp-posts. It is the one mathematical computation of which I am absolutely certain. Not all the actuaries, statisticians, and chartered accountants in existence, even though they produced reams of carefully audited statistics, could convince me that the number was either twenty-seven or twenty-nine. I have counted them too often. I counted them separately; I counted them by coupling them off into fourteen pairs; I counted them by dividing them into seven groups of four each, into four groups of seven each, and into two groups of fourteen each. There were twenty-eight of them; neither more nor fewer; there can be no shred of a shadow of a doubt about that! And yet, although I was as certain of this fact as I was of my own existence, I very often, of malice aforethought, deliberately deceived myself as to the number of those self-same lamp-posts!

Having nobody else to talk with on those long and solitary trudges, I used to talk to myself. It is always a good thing to do. It is the only way in which a speaker may be sure of having an intelligent and appreciative hearer; and it is the only way in which a hearer may be sure of listening

to a really sensible and eloquent speaker. I talked to myself; and, as I passed the first lamppost, I said to myself, 'One passed; twenty-seven to come!' I repeated this strange refrain until I passed the second lamp-post, when I changed it to 'Two passed; twenty-six to come!' And so on. This was on ordinary nights—fine nights, moonlight nights, and nights in which there were no black cats among the white tombstones. But when the night was particularly dark; or when the great gaunt branches of the elms above the lane had looked more than ever like huge arms outstretched to grasp and strangle me; or when the silent churchyard had seemed particularly ghostly and terrifying; or when the long, straight road with its twenty-eight lamp-posts had appeared more interminable than ever,—on *such* nights I fell back upon gammon and spinach!

And this is how I did it. When I came to the top of the road—the forest and the churchyard both behind me—I would run as fast as my legs would carry me past the first two lamp-posts, pretending not to see them. Then I paused, looked at the long file of lamp-posts in front of me, and said to myself, 'There are twenty-eight of them!' I thereupon set out on the last stage of my journey, and, as I passed the first post, I said to myself, 'One passed; twenty-seven to come!' and so on. When I passed the twenty-sixth lamp-post a great and wonderful surprise awaited me! 'Twenty-six passed; two more to come!' I said to myself. But there,

just beyond the twenty-sixth post, was my own gate! It had come a couple of hundred yards to meet me! It was like a slice of silver magic fallen from the lining of the clouds! Many a time I have thrown up my cap for the very joy of it! The memories of the lane through the woods and the path through the churchyard were swept from my mind by the wild delight of that sensational termination to my tramp. It was all gammon and spinach, of course; but, as I have said, gammon and spinach is a very savoury dish; and, at the end of a long, cold, weary walk, it was very acceptable.

But all this was a long time ago. Let us come to an experience of riper years. I have often found great relief, in moments of irritation and exasperation, in a feast of gammon and spinach. I have tried it many times, and have never known it to fail. It works in this way. That troublesome fellow, Smith, behaves in a fashion that causes you intense annoyance. Your first impulse is to rush off to his office and tell him, in good, honest Anglo-Saxon, exactly what you think of him. 'I'll give him a piece of my mind!' you say, as you put on your hat and coat. But perhaps reflecting that it would be a woful waste to squander on so worthless a wretch a commodity of which you have so little to spare, you slowly and meditatively return your hat to the peg. Perhaps you had better write to him! If you go to his office, you may say more than you intended! The discussion may become heated; and, at its close,

each will feel angry and aggrieved! Although you are altogether in the right, and he is altogether in the wrong, you may easily lose your temper in the course of the argument, and come away feeling miserable and ashamed. The wisest man cannot trust himself to select exactly the right words, and to utter them in exactly the right way, under such circumstances! Yes, it is undoubtedly better to write! Your choice of words is more deliberate, and you chivalrously give him the opportunity of replying in the same leisurely way! You go to your desk, spread the white sheet out before you, and take your pen in hand. But, even with the exercise of writing, the injury that Smith has inflicted upon you begins to smart afresh; your blood boils; your adjectives become increasingly piquant; you pass from remonstrance to complaint, from complaint to invective, and from invective to abuse.

Now for the gammon and spinach! I have found myself in this predicament many and many a time. I have sat down to pen a restrained and dignified protest; have passed from a judicial calm to a delirious fury; and have found the flaming sentences pouring from my pen like boiling lava from a volcano in eruption. It is dangerous to check the flow at that stage. If, having gone so far, I put the paper on one side and leave it, I find myself for hours afterwards nursing, like fractious twins, a pair of ill-conceived regrets. The first regret is that I lost my temper and spoiled my letter; the second regret

is that Smith has escaped scot-free! In this mood I am neither a saint nor a savage. So far as I am a saint, I am a sullied saint, a saint who flew into a passion! So far as I am a savage, I am an unsatisfied savage, a savage whose foe is still on the war-path, unslain and unscalped! No, I always find it dangerous to pause until the letter is finished. When I find the ink becoming hotter and hotter, and the phraseology more and more expressive, I let myself go! Let the volcano empty itself of its lava! I pour into the letter all that is in my hot and angry heart. I say all that I feel that I should like to say. I smite Smith hip and thigh; tell him all that I think of him; I throw all scruples to the winds; I spare him nothing. And then, when I have exhausted all the resources of vituperation, I sign the letter—and *burn it!* I cannot explain the psychology of it; but the effect is unquestionable. So far from being neither a saint nor a savage, I am now both! I am a saint exulting in self-conquest, and a savage flushed with triumph over his foe. The procedure appears ridiculous and indefensible; and yet any man who has tried it knows that it extracts the venom from the soul, and leaves the once-indignant writer at peace with himself, with Smith, and with the whole wide world. Let the letter first blaze furiously beneath the pen, and then let it blaze furiously beneath the poker, and in five minutes the flames will have died down in the soul and in the grate, and a sweet tranquillity will take

the place of a tumultuous wrath. I am told that Abraham Lincoln adopted a similar practice. I cannot find any reference to it in any of his biographies, but I can very well believe it. Father Abe was shrewd enough to know that the human heart is rarely logical. It scorns all nicely calculated pros and cons. It finds a way of its own—often an unexpected and fantastic way—out of life's struggles and distresses. It even falls back upon self-deception; it plays tricks with itself, lamp-post tricks and letter tricks; it finds comfort in the day of wrath in a dish of gammon and spinach!

When I enter a restaurant I only condescend to order meaner fare if I find to my sorrow that gammon and spinach is not on the menu. There is nothing like it. Lamb and mint sauce; roast beef and Yorkshire pudding; duck and green peas; boiled mutton and caper sauce,—these are all very well as makeshifts and substitutes. But the dish of dishes, beyond all comparison, is gammon and spinach, gammon and spinach!

I called on Elsie Maynard yesterday afternoon. Elsie is a pretty girl, and her young husband is justly proud of her. I officiated at their wedding nearly two years ago, and a baby boy came to their home last month. I found Elsie sitting on the verandah, enjoying the sunshine—and the sonshine! She gently lifted the soft, white veil and showed me the baby's face. It occurred to me that I had seen something of the same sort before; but I could see

that Elsie never had! Of all the babies that had ever been born, *this* was the loveliest, the bonniest, the sweetest, the best! Her heart told her so; and she believed it. Away at the back of her heart another voice, a feeble little voice, the voice of her reason, told here that every other mother felt as she felt, and that, in reality, her baby was just such a baby as the average baby born. But she scouted the voice of her poor little reason, and listened fondly to the voice of her great mother-heart. She was enjoying some gammon and spinach, of course; but gammon and spinach is delicious.

Go where you will, and, in every part of the world, you will find people who glory in believing that there is no nation under heaven to be compared with theirs! The visitor to whom this proud boast is made may know of a dozen superior civilizations, to say nothing of his own, but he will not argue the point. Why disillusion this happy foreigner? He is feasting on gammon and spinach; and, if he enjoys it, why snatch it from him? Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes says that, of all the thousands of towns in which he lectured, he never entered one through the centre of which the axis of the earth did not stick visibly out! In the opinion of the citizens, it was the hub of the universe, and its climate was particularly favourable to longevity! He could see with half an eye that the people were living on gammon and spinach; but there was no need to tell them so; gammon and spinach is a very toothsome and a very

wholesome diet. Why deprive the townsfolk of their favourite fare?

I was some time ago visiting a distant State. One day, in the course of an interval between the meetings, a little old lady made her way towards me. 'I do hope,' she said, 'that you are coming to see our church at Dunstan Brook!' I assured her that it was out of the question; my stay was a brief one; my programme was crowded. 'Oh, what a pity!' she exclaimed sadly. 'You really ought to see our church at Dunstan Brook!' Some years later I saw the church at Dunstan Brook. It was only a poor little barn, out in the fields. I thought of the old lady who, by the time I visited Dunstan Brook, was sleeping in the tiny God's-acre near by. To her this plain little structure was the Palace Beautiful, the loveliest spot on earth. And who would have it otherwise? It is one of those forms of self-illusion that no man would alter if he could.

Paul thought that his was the most astounding and sensational conversion that had ever been effected. 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' he said, *'of whom I am chief!'* Bunyan thought the same of his own case. Macaulay and Froude have argued that Bunyan was not such a bad man as he would have us think, and that therefore the transformation was not so great as he would lead us to believe. But you might just as well argue with Elsie Maynard about her baby. The man who has taken one long look into his own heart,

and one long look into the Saviour's face, will think that there never was grace like the grace by which he has been redeemed. An eternity of argument would not convince him that the salvation of any other soul could be as wonderful as the salvation of his own. Every converted man is in love with his own conversion.

II

A MYSTERY OF THE MANSE

I

It was a delicious morning in the early summer —and a Monday! The winter had been unusually severe; the spring had been wet and cold; and as I stood on the verandah of the Mosgiel manse that morning, the farms, right away to the distant foothills, seemed to be luxuriating restfully in the soft, rich, genial sunshine. The fields appeared to be drinking it in. An understanding existed between John Broadbanks and myself in those days, by which we spent our Mondays—when Mondays were fine—at each other's manses. One Monday I went over to Silverstream; the next he came to Mosgiel. Throughout the winter the weather, and a variety of other things, had broken sadly into the execution of this plan. Once, in the late autumn, I had spent a long, delightful day at Silverstream; and, about six weeks later, John had been my guest; but since then the arrangement had broken down completely. But I knew that I should be expected at Silverstream this morning; and I was eager to again enjoy a day in John's society. I prepared to make an early start.

At the gate I met the postman, who handed me a letter. Was it from John to tell me not to come? I was relieved on seeing that the handwriting was not his. Indeed, it was entirely unfamiliar. I tore open the envelope to make sure that its contents needed no immediate attention or reply. To my surprise I discovered that it contained no letter at all! Here, without note or comment of any kind, five-shillings-worth of penny postage-stamps—only that and nothing more! I held the envelope to the sunlight to make sure that no small missive had eluded me; I opened out the stamps, and turned them over and over; but nowhere could I find the slightest indication of the sender's meaning or intention. I was puzzled. I slipped the mysterious package into my pocket, and again set out for Silverstream. About a mile from John's manse was a huge hawthorn hedge, which, at this time of the year, was in its glory. As I approached this delightful bit of the road, and inhaled the sweet but delicate fragrance of the beautiful blossom, I saw John, riding on Brownie, with Gyp at his heels, coming to meet me. In order that he might share with me the loveliness and the perfume of the hawthorn, I waited under the hedge for him to come up. We had not seen each other for some time; we had a good deal to say; and in the glow of that roadside conversation, and amidst the spacious hospitalities that followed at the manse, I entirely forgot the envelope that I carried in my pocket.

II

After dinner we sat chatting on the verandah until Lilian brought out the afternoon tea. Then of course, we discussed the children—theirs and ours—until it occurred to me to ask a question that we generally put to each other on these occasions.

'Anything to do?' I inquired.

'Well,' he replied, 'there is a sick girl on whom I ought to call.' And then, turning to Lilian, 'Gladys Wylie is pretty bad; they're a good deal concerned about her; I think I ought to go!' And then, turning to me again, 'It's a cottage about a mile along the banks of the stream. Would you care to come for the sake of the walk?'

In ten minutes the manse was curtained from us by the willows that covered both banks of the stream. For a while we walked along the water's edge. The Silverstream received its title from the early settlers, and they named it happily. It is a perfectly clear little brook, full of vivacity and sparkling movement, that babbles gaily on over its gravel bed. Now and again we paused to watch a leaf being whirled about by the eddies, or to follow the movements of a big brown trout as he came stealthily up stream under the protection of the bank, and then whisked away with a splash on being startled by our shadows. Then, passing through the thick belt of willows, we made our way out into the open fields. The afternoon was in its

pride; the sun was throwing long, sharp shadows across the grass; it is the hour the rabbits love. And they were everywhere! It was good to watch them as they popped out of the dark, cavernous burrows along the bank and bounded off to join their comrades in the revels of the field. One minute the hole among the gnarled roots of the willow looks as lifeless as a tomb. The next, up pops a shy little form! He sits for a while erect upon his haunches, ears pricked up and eyes wide open! Then, bravely resolving to take all the hazards of the game, he hops off to play hide-and-seek among the tussocks. Sometimes, all bunched up to make himself resemble a stone, a rabbit would crouch behind a tuft of grass until we almost trod upon him, and then, his heart failing him at the last, he would spring up right at our feet and fly like the wind!

'Aha!' John suddenly exclaimed, pointing to a cottage round the bend of the stream, 'that's where the Wylies live! Will you come with me or wait here?'

I decided to wait; and, taking me down through the willows to the waterside, John drew my attention to a giant log that seemed to have been specially placed there for my accommodation. Sitting there, listening to the murmur of the stream, to the splash of the trout, and to the song of the birds, I chanced to slip my hand into my pocket, and was confronted once more by the mystery of the morning. I resolved, on John's return, to tell him about it.

'Use the stamps, my dear fellow,' he exclaimed, laughing, as we made our way back to the manse; 'use the stamps; make a note of its contents on the envelope, and keep it for reference in case anything turns up!'

The advice seemed sound; I made up my mind to act upon it. The envelope was returned to my pocket, and was again forgotten. We spent an hour with the children round the fire after tea, and then I set out for Mosgiel.

III

In accordance with John's counsel, I used the stamps, marked the envelope, and slipped it into a pigeon-hole, in case anything turned up. Something did turn up—many somethings and then a somebody; but I must tell my story bit by bit. A fortnight later, just as, by a curious coincidence, I was again starting for Silverstream, another envelope was delivered to me by the postman. It contained thirty penny stamps—and nothing more. I showed it to John, and he remarked upon a circumstance that had instantly caught my notice. The envelope this time was a blue one; it was of a different shape and a larger size as compared with its predecessor; it was addressed in a new handwriting; and it bore the city instead of the local postmark.

'Nothing for it,' said John, 'but to use the stamps, mark the envelope, and put it away with the other!'

I agreed with him, and acted accordingly. Some weeks went by without my again having occasion to revert to the matter. Then, in an envelope on which my address was typewritten, I again received a sheet of stamps—sixty halfpenny ones! I acted as before: put the stamps in the drawer and the envelope in the pigeon-hole with its predecessors. To make a long story short, this kind of thing continued at irregular intervals for years. The perplexing aspect of the matter was that no two envelopes were alike. The handwriting was nearly always a new one. Nearly always, but not always; for, spreading them out on the table, I could see that three of the envelopes, separated from each other by long periods of time, were addressed by the same hand. Still, this in itself offered no clue to a solution of the mystery, and John was as much puzzled by it as I was.

Just as I had abandoned all hope of getting to the bottom of the matter, the unexpected happened. For some time I had got into the habit of receiving the packages of stamps; of mechanically slipping the marked envelope into the pigeon-hole with its fellows; and of dismissing the matter from mind. But one morning the postman handed me half a dozen letters and circulars. The handwriting on one of the envelopes struck me as being familiar. I tried to recall it. Where had I seen that handwriting before? Suddenly it flashed upon me. I dived into the pigeon-hole and brought out all the envelopes. Yes, there could be no doubt about it. The hand

that addressed those three envelopes—the only three that were alike—had addressed this one, too! Yet this was merely a circular from a large drapery emporium in the town, announcing a winter sale! After dinner I put the four envelopes in my pocket—the three that had contained postage-stamps, and the one that had contained a circular—and set out for that drapery establishment. I knew the proprietor well, and I asked him if I might speak to the assistant who addressed the envelopes that I held in my hand. He looked amused, examined them carefully, and then led me to the office and introduced me to a young lady there. I recognized her as a girl that I had seen at the church occasionally.

At first she seemed astonished. Then, as a flood of recollection visited her, her astonishment turned to embarrassment. Was she free to speak?

'But, there!' she exclaimed, after a while, 'he never asked me to keep it secret, and, anyhow, I don't know who he was! He's a queer little old man who owns a small farm across the Plain somewhere. On each of these occasions he came into the shop to pay his bill, and when I handed him the change he asked me to run across to the post office and get him half-a-crown's worth of stamps. I did so; and then he asked if I had a private envelope in the office. When I took one from the drawer he asked me to address it to you. He said that you had done him a lot of good at some time or other, and that he liked to think that you were sometimes reading books

that you had bought with his money! He made me put the stamps I had bought into the envelope I had addressed; he gave me a penny for postage, and asked me to put the letter with our own mail. And that,' she added, 'is why I first started coming to church!'

I thanked her; and, the following Monday, John being our guest that day, I told him all about it. He laughed, and was deeply interested; yet we both felt that the problem was as far from being solved as ever. But, somehow, a new and tenderer emotion mingled with the surprise I felt when I occasionally saw a row of postage-stamps peeping out at me from the interior of a strange and unexpected envelope.

IV

The mystery unfolded suddenly, like a rosebud that, hanging for days upon its stem without the slightest sign of change, opens in a single night. I was just finishing up work in my study one Saturday morning, when I heard the click of the gate. Glancing out of the window, I beheld the oddest little form that I had ever seen coming up the asphalt walk to the front door. He was very small and very old, and very bent, and very wrinkled, and very grey and very shabby. I felt instinctively that this was my man, and it flashed upon me that it was some months since I had last heard from him. I went to the door myself, and at once saw that he was in

great trouble. I led him into the study and seated him in the arm-chair. He began by speaking of the stamps, and seemed surprised that I so readily accepted his story.

'And now,' he went on, 'I'm in sore trouble. Eighteen months ago somebody sent us a prospectus of one of these gold-dredging companies working up in Central Otago. It looked good; and we were told that it was sure to strike a rich vein soon; and we put everything into it. And we've lost every penny! We've had to sell up the old place; and, what with the disappointment and the ruination and the sale and everything, it's been too much for the wife; and she's very ill. The doctor's just been round to see her. He says that she must have a nurse and all sorts of things that I've got no money to buy. We haven't a friend in the world. We always kept ourselves to ourselves. We used to read your bits in the paper, and we seemed to know you. And,' his voice faltered for a minute, and then he went on, 'I wondered if you'd mind lending me the money I've sent you.'

I went to my drawer, and found, as it happened, that I had six pounds in the house.

'No,' he said, 'I reckon I've only sent you about five, and I'll take no more; and, as soon as we can pull things together again, I'll let you have it back. You've lifted a great load from my heart this day, and I'll never forget!'

He pressed my hand as he bade me good-bye at

the gate. I watched him shamble off down the road, and then went in to dinner. It was just as we were rising from the table that it flashed upon me that I had made the blunder of a lifetime. I had never asked him his name and address! I hurried down the street, but could see no sign of him. Once more he had vanished into the realm of mystery!

V

Three months later, in the middle of the week, John Broadbanks drove up suddenly to the gate of my manse. I could tell by the way that he threw down the reins and sprang from the buggy that he was excited.

'Come on,' he exclaimed; 'I've found your man, and he's dying! He wants to see you! Get ready quickly, and I'll tell you the rest as we drive over!'

As a matter of fact, there was very little to tell. John had been visiting across the Plain, and had been told of a little old man, reputed to be a miser, who was dying in a cottage near by. The old man's wife, they said, had been buried three months ago. John went in, read with him, prayed with him, and then, to his surprise, heard him mention my name. The truth flashed upon him, and he came straight over for me.

We were both there when he died. He arranged with us about the funeral. He was full of regrets about the impossibility of returning the borrowed

money. I assured and, I think, convinced him that I still felt under an enormous obligation to him. He seemed relieved, and passed away with a wan but gratified smile. John and I shared the duties at the graveside, and were, indeed, almost the only mourners.

'It's an odd thing,' John remarked to me as we drove away from the cemetery, 'it's an odd thing that two men, like our old friend and yourself, can have financial dealings with each other as a result of which neither is a penny the better off, and yet feel that each is immensely the richer for having known the other!'

And, so far as my part of it was concerned, I felt that he had summed up the situation with his usual skill.

III

POKING THE FIRE

It is wonderful how much time we waste in poking the fire! This improving reflection was brought home to me somewhat abruptly on reading an anecdote that Dr. Birkbeck Hill gives us concerning David Hume. The incident occurred in the earliest days of Hume's philosophical reputation. He met one day Mr. White, a London merchant in comfortable circumstances.

'I am surprised, Mr. Hume,' said the merchant, 'that a man of your good sense should think of being a philosopher. Why, I once took it into my head to be a philosopher, but tired of it most confoundedly, and very soon gave it up.'

'And pray, sir,' replied Hume, 'in what branch of philosophy did you employ your researches? What books did you read?'

'Books!' exclaimed Mr. White. 'Nay, sir, I read no books; but I used to set whole forenoons yawning and *poking the fire!*'

Now poking the fire is not philosophy, it does not even help a philosopher to philosophize. Yet we are all of us tempted at times to believe that we can gain our end by poking the fire. We resort to a certain restless and irrelevant activity in the blind and

frantic hope that, in some inexplicable way, the movement will bring our goal in sight. It is the instinct that leads a caged tiger, without any real hope of discovering a way of escape, to pace up and down his cage unceasingly, year after year. It is such a comfort to be doing something, even if there is no sense in what we are doing!

Alice—in the *Looking-glass* story—ran so fast with the Queen that they seemed to skim through the air. At last she stopped and looked round in surprise.

'Why, I believe we have been under this tree all the time! Everything's just as it was!'

'Of course it is,' said the Queen; 'what would you have it?'

'Well, in our country,' said Alice, still panting, 'you'd generally get to somewhere else—if you ran very fast, for a long time, as we've been doing.'

Yes, *generally*. But Alice would be amazed if she discovered how fast many people run without really getting anywhere. Like sheep that suffer from the 'rounders,' they go round and round, thinking that they are going on and on. Such people, like our would-be philosopher, poke the fire; that is all. And they stupidly imagine that poking the fire will somehow issue in brilliant philosophical inspirations. But perhaps, to make my meaning perfectly clear, I had better drop the language of hyperbole, and produce some concrete examples of this very subtle and very peculiar tendency.

I shall call two witnesses, one from the realm of fiction and the other from the realm of fact. Old Gabriel Betteredge, Lady Verinder's house-steward, was introduced to me by Mr. Wilkie Collins, and he makes excellent company. His soliloquies are all philosophies. Listen to this one: 'Gentlefolks have a very awkward rock ahead in life—the rock of their own idleness,' he says. 'Their lives being, for the most part, passed in looking about them for something to do, it is curious to see—especially when their tastes are of what is called the intellectual sort—how often they drift blindfolded into some nasty pursuit. Nine times out of ten they take to torturing something, or spoiling something—and they firmly believe that they are improving their minds, when the plain truth is they are only making a mess in the house. I have seen them—ladies, I am sorry to say, as well as gentlemen—go out day after day with empty pill-boxes and catch newts and beetles and spiders and frogs, and come home and stick pins through the miserable wretches, or cut them up, without a pang of remorse, into little pieces. You see my young master or my young mistress poring over one of their spider's insides with a magnifying glass; or you meet one of their frogs walking downstairs without his head—and when you wonder what this cruel nastiness means, you are told that it means a taste in my young master or my young mistress for natural history!' Old Gabriel has a great deal more to the same effect; but we may let him go about

his business. He has eyes sharp enough to see that just as poking the fire is not philosophy, so nasty habits are not natural history.

My second witness is a man of a very different stamp. Sir William Osler, one of the most eminent Professors of Medicine that our generation has seen, has delivered lectures to his Oxford students that should be read by all kinds and conditions of men. Again and again he shows how fond we all are of poking the fire. There is really nothing to be done, yet we fidgety mortals must do something! It may not be a case for drugs, yet we are unhappy if the doctor leaves without ordering us to swallow something nasty! 'Man,' he says, 'has an inborn craving for medicine. Heroic dosing for several generations has given his tissues a thirst for drugs. The desire to take medicine is one feature which distinguishes man, the animal, from his fellow creatures. It is really one of the most serious difficulties with which we doctors have to contend. Even in minor ailments, which would yield to dieting or to simple home remedies, the doctor's visit is not thought to be complete without the prescription!' Indeed, Sir William, in another lecture, avers that the doctor's visit itself is often a matter of poking the fire. There is nothing to be done; the doctor cannot help the man in any way; but the talk with his physician soothes and reassures him! He has poked the fire; he feels that, at any rate, he has done something!

The phenomenon is very common. In her remi-

niscences Mrs. Thomson, the wife of Archbishop Thomson, makes merry over the fact that she once saw twenty bishops on a treadmill. As a matter of fact, they were inspecting the jail under Mrs. Thomson's direction; and at her suggestion they mounted the treadmill to see what it felt like. It looked very comical, Mrs. Thomson says; and I can well believe it. And yet, when you go into the matter a little more thoroughly, there is nothing very exceptional about the scene that Mrs. Thomson witnessed.

Indeed, there are plenty of people who are strongly of opinion that most bishops, philosophers, and similar dreamers spend all their lives on the treadmill. They are not there as casual visitors, but as convicts undergoing a long sentence. Did not Macaulay employ this identical image? 'The very admiration which we feel for these eminent thinkers,' he says, 'forces us to adopt the opinion that their powers were systematically misdirected. For how else could it be that such powers should do so little for mankind? A pedestrian may show as much muscular vigour on a treadmill as on the high-way road. But on the road his vigour will assuredly carry him forward; but on the treadmill he will not advance an inch. The ancient philosophy was a treadmill, not a path. It was made up of revolving questions, of controversies which were always beginning again. It was a contrivance for having much exertion and no progress.' Renan said the

same; and so, for the matter of that, did Bacon. Bacon liked to feel firm ground beneath his feet. He held that religion is, of necessity, based on revelation; and revelation does not lend itself to logic. In such a realm, therefore, the philosopher is completely out of his element. He is like a cat looking helplessly up at a bird that has soared skywards. He is in the same plight as Archimedes, who claimed that he could move the earth if only he could find a fulcrum somewhere outside it. But how to find such a fulcrum? When the philosopher desires information concerning Antarctica or Central Africa, he has but to equip an expedition, and he can obtain all the knowledge he wishes; for Antarctica and Central Africa are on this planet, and, therefore, get-at-able. But when the philosopher desires information concerning the world invisible, he can send out no expedition. His quest for truth has reached a stage at which all his investigations must prove as futile as the search of the children for the pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow. Speculation, pressed beyond that point, is analogous to the ludicrous leap of the cat after the bird in the air, to the attempt to lever the earth by means of a fulcrum placed upon it, to Macaulay's treadmill, or, to employ Bacon's imagery, to the web that the spider produces from within the compass of its own body! It is merely poking the fire.

Church history is always the best and broadest platform on which to investigate a subject such as

this. Glance across the centuries. Think of the hermits. They would be saints. And so, as Gibbon tells us, 'they usurped the den of some wild beast whom they affected to resemble. They passed many days without food, many nights without sleep, and many years without speaking.' The visitor to Rome at this hour will find there a church in commemoration of the life of Saint Onofrio. If he should inquire as to the exploits of the saint, he will be told that 'Saint Onofrio was a monk of Thebes, who retired to the desert far from the sight of men, and dwelt there in a cave for sixty years. During all that time he never beheld one human face, or uttered one word except in prayer. When discovered, he was crawling on the ground like a beast. His hair was wild and matted, and his intellect was in ruins.' Or we think of Martin Luther and his cloistered cell at Erfurt. 'My sins! my sins! my sins!' he cries. And in the convent he starves and tortures himself until his moans of anguish frighten the other inmates, and again and again he is picked up apparently dead. Or, coming to our own time, we think of Pusey, racking his frail body with starvation and sleeplessness, with hair shirts and cruel discipline, until he thinks that further agony will derange his nervous system. Or we think of Cardinal Vaughan, and the pains that he took to keep the wounds made by his spiked wristlet always raw and festering. Now what is all this but poking the fire? Hume's friend would be a philosopher; but, subconsciously aware

of his failure in philosophy, he finds a subtle compensation in poking the fire. He is doing something, anyhow! Onofrio would be a saint; Luther would taste the rapture of forgiveness; Pusey would be pious; Vaughan would attain to eminent meekness. But these aspirations are high, and difficult of attainment. They feel acutely their failure. They must do something to relieve their outraged consciences. And what they do is a poking of the fire. It is always easier to poke the fire than to make any real contribution to philosophy. It is easier to dwell in a cave like a beast than to adorn the world like a saint. It is easier to imprison yourself in a cloister than to burn like a flaming torch amidst the haunts of men. To poke the fire is the idle resort of the man who can't, and who is too proud to confess that he can't. John Wesley used to implore his preachers not to scream. Screaming is not preaching; it is not passion; it is not eloquence. Screaming is the subterfuge of the man who cannot preach, who possesses no passion, and can command no eloquence. He is poking the fire, that is all! The real philosopher rarely pokes the fire. He is more inclined to the opposite extreme. He will become absorbed in the splendid problems of the universe, and let the fire go out!

The fact is that every man of us has his work to do. All the ages have been in travail preparing it for us, and us for it. And now that, as a result of a million marvellous processes, *we* and *it* have

both arrived, and stand face to face with each other, a terrible temptation besets us. We are not inclined to idleness so much as to irrelevant activity. I occasionally—not often—read the church advertisements in the newspaper. I see that the churches are very busy; but I cannot always satisfy myself that they are busy about their proper business. We are so sorely tempted to poke the fire. And, unless we are wonderfully careful, we shall discover, after all our energies are dissipated and all our powers exhausted, that our real work has not been touched. Rudyard Kipling describes the soul of Tomlinson confronting the Apostle Peter at the gate of heaven. It is the tragedy of a man who has spent his life in poking the fire. Peter cries:

'Stand up, stand up now, Tomlinson, and answer loud and high
The good that ye did for the sake of men or ever ye came to die—
The good that ye did for the sake of men in little earth so lone!'
And the naked soul of Tomlinson grew white as a rain-washed bone.

* * * * * * *

'This I have read in a book,' he said, 'and that was told to me,
And this I have thought that another man thought of a prince in Muscovy.'
The good souls flocked like homing doves and bade him clear the path,
And Peter twirled the jangling keys in weariness and wrath.
'Ye have read, ye have heard, ye have thought,' he said, 'and the tale is yet to run,
By the worth of the body that once ye had, give answer—
What ha' ye done?'

Yes; Hume's poor friend rose at last from his chair without an idea in his head that would enrich the world's philosophy; but the fire had been poked to pieces. I am wofully afraid of finding myself at last in the same terrible predicament.

IV

TWINS!

'But, mamma, where's the other one?'

So spoke little Maisie Benfell, almost tearfully. She had been told that a baby brother had arrived. Taking her hand, the nurse had led her into the softly lighted, softly scented room; and she had kissed the queer and puckered little face that was almost buried in the folds of its pure white shawl. Having done her duty in this regard, Maisie's eyes eagerly scanned the bed in anxious search of something that she could not find. Like most of us, she was being tyrannized by facts. She could not forget that five years ago, and again two years ago, twins had come to the home. Since, within her brief experience, it had happened twice, it seemed to poor little Maisie to be the normal and regular thing. Had this new arrival been so careless as to lose his companion on the way? The thought filled the maternal soul of Maisie with consternation and dismay. There was a perceptible trembling of the lips and a moistening of the eyes.

'Where's the other one?' she inquired, in really delightful alarm.

For many a long year Maisie had blushingly to

submit to the constant repetition of this delicious story; but I am not sure that there is not something to be said in her defence. Her assumption is not as absurd as her tormentors would have us to believe. I have, therefore, accepted a brief for Maisie; and I undertake to show that twins are in accordance with the eternal fitness of things. There is something wrong somewhere when, like the puckered, pink face in the little white shawl, one finds himself all alone.

Dr. Rendel Harris, in one of his learned lectures, says that primitive peoples are tortured by two great fears—the dread of thunder and the dread of twins. Thunder must certainly be extremely terrifying to untutored peoples; but it is not so easy to understand their horror of twins. I recall two twin stories, one from literature and one from observation; and they are both of them of a very attractive kind. Since leaving England, I have only once revisited my native land, and that was many years ago. But to my dying day I shall never forget the arrival of the ship in Plymouth Sound. I really do not know which scene expresses the greater pathos, the departure of an ocean liner on its long voyage, or its arrival at its journey's end. On both occasions there are many tears—tears of grief in the one case and tears of gladness in the other. But see, here on the deck of the *Tongariro* is a little old man whose hair is white with the snows of nearly eighty winters. During the long voyage from New Zealand to the Homeland he had been a

general favourite on board. Everybody called him 'Grandpa,' and the children particularly were very fond of him. Then, on a certain never-to-be-forgotten morning, we sighted the English coast. In the course of the next few hours we ran past the Eddystone lighthouse, picked up the pilot, and anchored in Plymouth Sound. And then a strange thing happened. The tender came off from the shore, bringing with it, on its deck, a group of people anxious to meet their kindred from the uttermost ends of the earth. And there, in the very forefront of the group, stood 'Grandpa!' It was one of those moments in which one distrusts the evidence of his senses. We felt as one must feel who thinks he sees a ghost. There he stood on the deck of the tender; and yet how could he posibly have left the ship? The mystery was soon unravelled. The tender bumped against the side of the ship; a gangway was lowered; and then, from the throng at the top of the gangway, there emerged the real 'Grandpa,' our own 'Grandpa,' the children's 'Grandpa.' He was as excited as a schoolboy off for the holidays. His face was flushed and his eyes sparkled. His counterpart on the deck of the tender was no less agitated. As soon as the barriers were removed the two old greybeards, as like as two peas, rushed towards each other, and, a second later, were sobbing in each other's arms! They were twin-brothers, and had not met since they played as boys in the English fields!

For my second story I must go to Edinburgh. I remember, when in that romantic city, visiting the tomb of Professor George Wilson, one of the greatest Scotsmen, one of the greatest scientists, and one of the greatest Christians that even Edinburgh has produced. Professor George Wilson and his brother came into the world together, just a century ago, and both died young. All through his brief but brilliant life, however, Professor Wilson cherished one vivid and beautiful memory. He loved to reflect that it was his mother's custom to come every night to the cot in which her twin boys were sleeping, and to whisper over their heads the blessing that the aged Jacob breathed over the sons of Joseph: 'The God who fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.' George once confided to a friend of his that this nightly benediction had such a charm for him that he used often to lie awake, pretending to be asleep, that he might enjoy it to the full. It sweetened and sanctified the whole of his life. Towards the close of his short career he again refers to it. 'Many a time,' he says, 'when I was a child, and in early youth, has my mother invoked on my head and on my twin-brother's as we slept the gracious benediction of Jacob. That prayer has been answered in full for one of them, who bade me farewell some twelve years ago in assured hope of a blessed resurrection; and the other rejoices to know that he is the child of many prayers.' It pleases me to-day to

reflect that whilst one fond Scottish mother bent proudly over that double cot in Scotland, another mother, somewhere in the South, was bending, no less fondly and no less proudly, over the cot that sheltered the infancy of my two greybeards! Can anybody wonder that, with two such pictures in my mind, I am at a loss to understand the linking of thunder and twins?

But I set out to show that twins are the law of the universe. I promised to prove that Maisie was right in regarding the solitary babe as abnormal. And is she not? A big steamer is propelled by twin-screws; and we all make our progress through life in pretty much the same way. What of our twin hands, our twin feet, our twin eyes, our twin ears, and so on? In regard both to the external and to the internal organs, the body is largely made up of duplicates. We even have two sets of brains. The twin principle operates everywhere. What, too, of our friendships and our courtships, our matings and our marriages? After all Maisie's startled question was merely another way of saying that it is not good for a man to be alone.

But we must go deeper. I was sitting in a cave by the seaside the other day reading *The Professor at the Breakfast-table,* when, to my utter astonishment, the garrulous old gentleman suddenly broke into a discussion of this very matter of twins. He speaks of the extraordinary way in which events often dovetail into each other. He describes a

fishing-smack being run down in the darkness by a huge ocean liner; and, simultaneously, the fisherman's wife wakes with a shriek, calls the name of her husband, and sinks back to uneasy slumbers upon her lonely pillow—a widow! And, reflecting upon the frequency of happenings of this kind, he goes on to say that there are about as many twins in the births of thought as of children. 'For the first time in your life you learn some fact or come across some idea. Within an hour, a day, a week, that same fact or idea strikes you from another quarter. It seems as if it had passed into space and bounded back upon you as an echo from the blank wall that shuts in the world of thought. Yet no possible connexion exists between the two channels by which the thought or the fact arrived.' We have all noticed the odd way in which a person will appear almost as soon as we have mentioned his name. Or you think strongly of an absent friend, of whom you have not heard for years, and next morning the postman slips into your hand a letter in the old familiar handwriting!

One of these days somebody will present us with a Philosophy of Coincidences, and when we have read it we shall recognize it as nothing more nor less than a Philosophy of Twins. Take a few cases at random. We all know that, on October 7, 1849, Edgar Allan Poe, the American poet, passed away; whilst on that very selfsame day, James Whitcomb Riley, another American poet, was born! Again,

on October 9, 1845, Renan put off his clerical habit and left the Roman Church; and on that selfsame day, Newman entered it! Readers of Macaulay will remember that, on the very day on which the elder Pitt made his last speech in the House of Commons, Burke made his first. And, later on, on the same day on which the younger Pitt first took his seat as Prime Minister, his supreme foe, Napoleon, was proclaimed as Emperor! On February 12, 1809, Abraham Lincoln was born on one side of the Atlantic and Charles Darwin on the other. On another day, about ten years later, Queen Victoria and Caroline Fox were simultaneously born! On the same day, in 1616, Shakespeare, the greatest English writer, and Cervantes, the greatest foreign writer, both passed away. And it has always struck me as a most impressive coincidence that, on the day on which the French mob tore the cross from Notre Dame and abjured Christianity, William Carey landed in India and claimed a new continent for Christ! Both events took place on November 11, 1793.

But, of all such twin-events, America can boast by far the most remarkable. Indeed, it may almost be recorded as a case of triplets. For, on July 4, 1826, the people of the United States celebrated the Jubilee of the Declaration of Independence. It happened that two of the great Independence Presidents —John Adams and Thomas Jefferson—were still living. Adams was ninety-one, Jefferson was

eighty-three. It was decided to make the Jubilee a festival in honour of these two veterans. From the Atlantic to the Pacific the names of Adams and Jefferson were that day toasted and acclaimed. And the two old men, how did they celebrate the great occasion? Both died on that auspicious day! Adams passed away at sunset, murmuring, 'Ah well, Jefferson still survives!' But therein he was mistaken, for his old comrade had crossed the bar at noon! The Jubilee of Independence, the death of Jefferson, and the death of Adams all took place on the very selfsame day!

But now let me lift the subject to a still loftier plane! I can never open the sacred records without discovering two distinct elements. I find the element of Prophecy and the element of History. But the striking thing is that the two run along precisely parallel lines. I find the prophets threatening Edom, Tyre, Babylon, and Jerusalem with certain disasters; and, long afterwards, I find the historians describing these same disasters as, one by one, overtaking the disobedient cities. I see at once that the Voice that speaks in Prophecy is the Voice of Him whose hand directs the moving pageant of History. Prophecy and History are twins!

Again, I find in these sacred records a number of stern and uncompromising commandments. 'Thou shalt not steal'; 'Thou shalt not kill'; 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'; and so on. But then, I should have known that it is wrong to steal, to kill, and to

commit adultery even if no tables of stone had told me so. A Voice within my own breast says, 'Thou shalt not steal,' 'Thou shalt not kill,' 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' Now, is not this also a striking coincidence—the Voice of the Outward Law affirming exactly what the Voice of the Inner Law declares? Does it not suggest that the Voice Without and the Voice Within are, in point of fact, the same Voice? Conscience and Commandment are twins!

And, once more, is it not an impressive circumstance that, with the progress of the suns, it has become more and more clear that the things that are inscribed upon the pages of the Book of Nature are the things that are inscribed upon the pages of the Book of Revelation? A few years ago Science and Religion looked askance at each other. But as we have come more accurately to read the riddles of the universe, and as we have come more intelligently to read the secrets of revelation, we have gradually discovered that we are reading two volumes by the same Author. Science and Religion are twins!

I will close this chapter with a story—and a true one. Here is a boy, whose parents have left him for a few hours, and who, in the absence of companions, finds the time hanging heavily upon his hands. He wanders into his father's library and pokes about among the books. Presently he lights upon one that at least *begins* with a story. He suspects that there may be some philosophizing or moralizing or sermonizing later on, but he tells him-

self that he can easily abandon it at that stage. He scampers off to the stable-loft; throws himself on the hay; and plunges into the book. He is captivated by the story; and finds it impossible to drop the book when that story comes to an end. He reads on and on and on. He is rewarded by one great golden word whose significance he has never before discovered: *'The Finished Work of Christ!'* The theme entrances him; and at last he only rises from his bed in the soft hay that he may kneel on the hard floor of the loft and surrender his young life to the Saviour who had surrendered everything for him. This is one side of the story of the conversion of Hudson Taylor, the Apostle of Chinese Missions.

But the story has another side. When his mother returned, the boy felt that he must confide to her sympathetic ear his wonderful secret.

'Oh, mother,' he cried, 'you do not know what has happened!'

'I do, my boy!'

'But how?'

'Well, Hudson, I will tell you. I had an hour to spare, and in that hour I could think of nothing and nobody but *you.* I felt that I must go aside and pray for my boy. And you have come to tell me that my prayer has been answered.'

And, on comparing notes, they discovered that the hour that the mother spent in intercession was the hour that her boy had spent in the loft! I can no more explain it than I can explain the birth of

twins. But I am as certain of the relationship existing between the two sides of the story as I am certain of the relationship existing between the two babies who lie side by side in the same double cot.

> "Away in foreign lands they wondered how
> Their simple word had power!
> At home the Christians, two or three, had met
> To pray an hour!"

There is a good deal about it that I cannot understand; but, clearly, Prayer and Performance are intimately related. Indeed, Prayer and Performance are twins!

V

THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN

STROLLING through the Art Gallery at Bendigo yesterday, I was arrested by Mr. F. Boe's picture of 'The Midnight Sun.' It represents the crimson midnight as it is seen in the North of Norway. But as I stood admiring the picture it occurred to me that Norway has no monopoly of sunshine at midnight. The lurid spectacle, seen from those frozen fiords, is doubtless very wonderful; but it has its counterparts in other latitudes. Daylight and darkness do not depend upon the gyrations of the globes. I suppose there was a time when the sun ruled the day and the moon the night. If so, it was 'once upon a time,' when all the other wonderful things happened; but not now. In our era we are often enveloped in dense darkness at high noon, and bask in radiant sunshine at midnight. The sun and the moon have simply nothing at all to do with it. We determine daylight and darkness without consulting them. They look helplessly on. Let me illustrate what I mean. I have often caught myself wondering if some lingering thought of Judas floated across the subconscious mind of Robert Browning when he wrote his 'Lost Leader.'

Just for a handful of silver he left us.

And the analogy by no means ends with the reference to the silver. The poem continues:

> Blot out his name, then—record one lost soul more,
> One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
> One more triumph for devils, and sorrow for angels,
> One more wrong to man, one more insult to God!
> Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
> There will be doubt, hesitation, and pain,
> Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
> Never glad confident morning again!

Now I have always felt that there is something cryptical about that suggestive record of the exodus of Judas from the Last Supper. 'He went out and it was night.' And my suspicion of a hidden meaning lurking in the apparently artless record is powerfully fortified whenever I glance over Browning's poem:

> Life's night begins . . . the glimmer of twilight.

Both the apostle and the poet evidently design to show us that there is some necessary and essential connexion between moral dereliction and moral darkness. Treachery leads to twilight.

'He went out and it was night,' says John.

'Just for a handful of silver he left us. . . . Life's night begins . . . the glimmer of twilight,' says Browning.

The analogy is too obvious and arresting to be the child of chance.

Now it would be quite easy to prove that that

particular night was clear and starlit. The hills around Jerusalem were bathed in the silvery splendour of moonlight. There was nothing in the outward conditions to call for the evangelist's picturesque monosyllables. Moreover, the singular thing is that in the dissolution of that company that met around the table, Judas was the first to go. The elements of darkness were, of course, more pronounced and more emphatic when John went out, and Peter and James. And why are we not told that '*Jesus* went out and it was night'? Peter went out to be crucified; James went out to be beheaded; Philip went out to be hanged; Bartholomew went out to be burned; Thomas went out to be crucified; James went out to be shot; and John went out to torture and lonely exile. Yet of none of them is it written that they went out and it was night. Judas went out to thirty pieces of silver, 'and it was night.' Jesus went out to the anguish of Gethsemane and the horrors of Calvary, and He went with a song on His lips! 'They sang a hymn.'

And, at that touchstone, the mystery stands revealed! The wildest frolic of fancy cannot conjure up a song to the lips of Judas. There was song in the heart of Jesus, as there is song in the heights of heaven. And for the same reason. Sunshine and song are twin sisters. They are inseparable. The loneliest bush becomes choral with wild melody as soon as the sun bursts through the clouds. There is song in heaven because there is no night there.

And there was a song in the soul of Jesus arising from the same cause. 'There was no night *there*.' How could there be? 'In Him is no darkness at all.' He went out, singing, to His suffering; and it was *light*. Judas went out, skulking, to his silver, and it was *night*. This, then, is the interpretation of the cryptograph. Life consists not in the lights and shadows that play about our path, but in the inner and deeper experiences of the soul. The dense, dense darkness was in the heart of Judas. If a million suns could have focussed all their burning rays upon his path; if his brow could have been encircled by all the stars of God; if all the lights of the universe could have flashed and blazed about his feet, it would have made no difference. When a man sells his soul for thirty pieces of silver, it is always night, wherever the sun may be! Who that has read the life of Henry Martyn can ever forget the pathetic story of poor Sabat, the Arab? He sold his Saviour, as Judas did, and returned to Moslemism. But at Malacca he met Dr. Milne, who questioned him as to the satisfaction he found in betraying his old faith. Poor Sabat burst into tears. 'I am wretched,' he cried. 'I have a mountain of burning sand on my head. When I go about I know not what I am doing. It is, indeed, an evil thing and a bitter to forsake the Lord.' 'He went out and it was night!'

It is never of much use consulting the barometer or the meteorological report in the newspaper. The forecast can never be accurate for the simple but

sufficient reason that we each manufacture our own weather. When a man puts on his hat and goes out of the front gate, he carries his own sunshine or his own gloom with him. It is never of much use asking people as to the beauty of holiday resorts. Everything depends on the mood in which they visited them. When a man packs his bag and sets off to some distant scene, he carries its beauty in his brain, or leaves it at home, as the case may be. I knew two men in New Zealand—Norman Findlay and Eric Williams. Each decided to spend his holiday in the wild, romantic country about the slopes of Mount Earnslaw.

'Well, and how did you enjoy it?' I asked Norman, a few months later.

'The most desolate district I have ever seen,' he replied gloomily, 'perfect wilderness!'

A couple of days later I met Eric, and asked the same question.

'A glorious place,' he exclaimed, with enthusiasm, 'a perfect Paradise. New beauties break upon you everywhere!'

I found out afterwards that, whilst staying at Earnslaw, Norman was waiting impatiently for the results of his final University examination, about which he was justified—as the event proved—in being extremely apprehensive. Eric, on the other hand, went there for his honeymoon!

It makes all the difference. Take, for example, the Highlands of Scotland. To-day they are num-

bered among the scenic grandeurs of Europe. People gladly journey hundreds of miles that they may gaze with awe upon those great, silent hills, all draped in their mantle of brown heath and shaggy wood. The descriptions of visitors are couched in a vocabulary that simply glows with the fervour of unbounded admiration. But it was not always so. Captain Burt, the first Englishman to visit that awe-inspiring region, described those towering peaks as 'monstrous excrescences.' Their deformity, he said, was such that the most sterile plains seemed lovely by comparison! Oliver Goldsmith, too, after exploring Highland scenes which to-day swarm with enraptured tourists, ridiculed it all as 'an unfruitful country, its hills all brown with heath, and its valleys scarcely able to feed a rabbit!'

Or go to Italy. When Thomas Gray, the author of the Elegy, looked upon Italy from Mount Cenis—a landscape that, for loveliness, stands almost unrivalled in the world—he wrote to his friend, Benjamin West, that 'its horrors were accompanied with too much danger to give one time to reflect upon their beauties.' Now why this thusness? Has Scotland changed? Has Italy changed? Of course not. The change is in the emotions of those who gaze upon these unchanging things. When Burt and Goldsmith visited the Highlands of Scotland, travelling had not been made as safe as now it is; and their minds were terrorized by a thousand apprehensions. The same sense of fear peeps out of

Gray's letter to West. As Macaulay says, 'A traveller is not likely to be thrown into ecstasies by the abruptness of a precipice from which he is in imminent danger of being hurled; by the boiling waves of a torrent which suddenly swirls away his baggage and forces him to run for his life; by the gloomy grandeur of a pass where he finds a corpse which marauders have just stripped and mangled; or by the screams of those eagles whose next meal may probably be on his own eyes.'

'Horrible!' says Captain Burt.

'Terrible!' says Oliver Goldsmith.

'Beautiful!' says your twentieth-century tourist.

But the difference was not in the scenes upon which they gazed. The difference was within. The horror, the terror, and the beauty lurked within the souls of the respective visitors.

I remember well an experience that befell me in my New Zealand pastorate. In the morning I called at a cottage, where I found the father and mother saying good-bye to their only son. He was wild and dissolute, impatient of the restraints of the old home, and eager for the glare of the city. He awkwardly received their caresses and set out. I saw him pass under the overarching porch of honeysuckle and convolvulus; I watched him hurry along the gravel path that ran through the garden to the gate. I stood with his father and mother as he strode off down the country road. The sun was shining brilliantly, and the birds were singing. The

hum of insects and the breath of summer were in the air. Then I turned with those parents into the house. They sank into their chairs on either side of the grate, and, simultaneously, broke out into a tempest of tears. I knew what was in their hearts. 'He went out and it was night'—the sun and the birds and the bees notwithstanding.

That very evening, to complete the story, I was invited to speak, in the same district, at a valedictory service held to take farewell of a young lady who was sailing as a missionary to India. She was the only child of her parents, who were both present. She was taking her life in her hands, and turning her face towards a life of imminent peril, certain privation, and probable persecution. She was going to a land of darkness, corruption, and superstition. Yet, as I sat on the platform and watched the faces of her parents, I could not help contrasting them with those of my morning visit. Smiles shone through their tears. Their heavy grief was shot through by holy gratitude. She went out and it was light—the blackness through which she groped the way home notwithstanding.

They formed a striking contrast, those two farewells. He went out into the sunshine, to the shouts and laughter of his boon companions. She went away to scenes of endless sadness and sorrow and suffering. He went to the gay city, the lurid glare of whose lights he had seen on the horizon every night of his life. She went to lay down her life on

a dark and distant continent. And yet *his* going was like the exodus of Judas, whilst *hers* was like the departure of John. He went out and it was night. She went out and it was light. Is it not true that the sun and the moon are simply idle onlookers at our daylight and our darkness? It is not in them to bring us dawn or dusk. Every reader of Hall Caine's *Deemster* remembers the night of the murder. What an hour was that when, in conversation with Mona, Dan discovered that his crime was as unnecessary as it was unnatural! 'The night was dark,' the novelist tells us, 'but Dan felt the darkness not at all, for the night was heavier within him.' That is the secret—the heavier night within. That was what blinded the recreant disciple and the 'Lost Leader.' They went out and it was night.

That is why, at conversion, the whole world looks new. Frank Bullen says that as he walked through the New Zealand bush the day after his conversion every tree seemed to be transfigured with a sudden beauty. 'I remember,' says Mr. Moody, 'the morning on which I came out of my room after I had first trusted God. I thought the old sun shone a good deal brighter than it ever had before—I thought that it was just smiling upon me. As I walked out upon Boston Common and heard the birds singing in the trees, I thought they were all singing a song to me.' It is an old story. Wade Robinson carries us all with him when he sings:

Heaven above is softer blue,
  Earth around is sweeter green,
Something lives in every hue,
  Christless eyes have never seen;

Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
  Flowers with richer beauties shine,
Whilst I know, as now I know,
  I am His, and He is mine.

Even as I lay down my pen I can hear the piano in another room. Somebody is playing:

There is sunshine in my soul to-day,
  More glorious and bright
Than glows in any earthly sky,
  For Jesus is my Light.

That sums up everything. The man who carries the radiance in his own soul has found the Land of the Midnight Sun. Robert Louis Stevenson tells of a pastime in which he and his boyish companions indulged in their Scottish home. They called themselves 'the lantern-bearers.' He forgets how the game was played; he only remembers that every boy carried a muffled lantern under his cloak. It was a game for dark winter evenings, and the fun simply consisted in the chuckling merriment that each boy enjoyed in the consciousness that, however blinding the darkness might become, he had under his belt a light which he could flash out at any moment. 'We used,' he says, 'to exult and sing over this knowledge.' The emotion Stevenson describes is akin to

the secret joyousness of the Christian faith. There is a ripple of holy laughter in the hearts of all who follow the King, because they know that, however drear their circumstances may become, it can never, never be night with them. There is a darkness that all the suns that shine can never dispel. There is a sunshine that can never, by any possibility, yield to dusk or twilight. And in the light of that inner sunshine every outward object stands transfigured. Happy they who, having entered into such an experience, have reached the Land of the Midnight Sun!

VI

WANTED!

A NEWSPAPER, according to Mark Twain, is a small quantity of information entirely surrounded by advertisements. We may let it go at that. The definition will suit my present purpose admirably. An island is a small quantity of land entirely surrounded by water. But the most interesting thing about the island is the water that surrounds it. It is the water that makes it an island. As soon as you step ashore on the island you instinctively climb to some eminence, shade your eyes with your hand, and gaze out upon the sea. Similarly, the most fascinating feature of a newspaper is the ocean of advertisements by which the cables and the casualties are entirely surrounded.

Ancient Gaul, as every student of Caesar knows to his cost, was divided into *three* parts. Therein ancient Gaul differs from the modern journal. For a newspaper is divided into *two* parts. The one part is all reality; the other part is all romance. The element of reality is represented by the news; the element of romance is represented by the advertisements. For an advertisement is a romance in miniature. It may be romantic as history is romantic,

or it may be romantic as fiction is romantic. But, whether historical romance or imaginative romance, it is always a romance, sometimes a wildly sensational romance. I have not actually counted the advertisements in this morning's paper, but, speaking roughly—an offence of which advertisements are never guilty—there cannot be fewer than five thousand of them. My penny has, therefore, purchased for me, in addition to the cables and the casualties, about five thousand of the latest novels. They are pocket editions, of course, but they are none the worse for that. My dictionary defines a novel as a narrative reflecting some new phase of human life. Each of these five thousand advertisements answers exactly to that description. The newsboy had no idea that he was selling me such a library.

The pity of it is that we live at such a pace that we have no time to luxuriate in this riot of romance. No time—nor inclination. For there's the rub! No inclination! If an advertisement be as seductive an affair as I have suggested, why do we not revel in the enchantments of the advertising pages? The reasons are numerous, subtle, and intricate. To begin with, the paper comes in the morning; and we do not indulge in romance before breakfast. We are in a whirl of bed, bacon, and business. Some very enticing novels, calf editions with gilt edges, adorn the bedroom mantelpiece; but it never occurs to us to read *them* in the morning. We are in a sternly prosaic mood. The newspaper is divided

into its two sections—reality and romance. We gulp down the cables and the casualties; and we feel that, like the neat but neglected novels on the bedroom mantelpiece, the advertisements can wait!

There is no pathos in life quite so poignant as the pathos of their condition who are made to feel that they are unloved, unappreciated, undesired. It is a sadness that overtakes all things that are common —and cheap. Advertisements, however romantic, are very common—and very cheap. When the newsboy brings you five thousand advertisements for a penny, and gives them to you, not because you want them, but because he cannot sift out the cables and the casualties that you *do* want from the advertisements that you *don't,* you are not likely to set any inflated value upon the unhappy advertisements. Advertisements are as common as the leaves of the elm-trees by the gate, as common as the blades of grass on the lawn, as common as the raindrops that are lashing at my window! Anybody who has taken the trouble to examine an elm leaf or a grass blade or a rain-drop under a microscope knows that each of them is a world of the most amazing wonders. But they are common and cheap; we have no eyes for them. If there were but one elm leaf or one grass blade or one rain-drop in the world, we would cross all the oceans and scour all the continents to inspect so marvellous a thing. But here are thousands of them beside my study window! And here are thousands of advertisements in my morning paper!

A man is a more valuable thing than a million suns; but who turns his head to look at a man?

I owe these reflections to an experience that befell me this afternoon. I took the train to Beechington, and strolled along the sands as far as a certain sunny and sheltered cove that, in tired moments, often calls to me. I sat down, and, after a breathing-space, thrust my hand into my pocket for my book. It was not there! How stupid! I had slipped the volume into my overcoat pocket; had set out; had found that the sun was hotter than I had supposed; and had returned the coat to its peg—book and all! Here was I in this charming retreat with nothing to read but the paper in my hand, and I already knew the cables and the casualties by heart! I opened it again on the off-chance that I had missed something of importance; and was bewildered by the ocean of advertisements. The paper contained, I found, exactly two hundred and fifty-two columns; and, of these, two hundred and two were devoted to advertisements. I ran my eye down these two hundred and two columns. I seemed to be surveying a wilderness of want. 'Wanted, a house!' 'Wanted, a tenant!' 'Wanted, a master!' 'Wanted, a man!' 'Wanted, a mistress!' 'Wanted, a maid!' 'Wanted, borrowers!' 'Wanted, lenders!' 'Wanted, buyers!' 'Wanted, sellers!' 'Wanted, a husband!' 'Wanted, a wife!' It was 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' all the time! The whole world seemed to be in want. I scanned these eager and clamorous columns until

everything about me seemed to be echoing their petulant, insistent cry. I discovered at last what it is that the wild waves are always saying. As they broke at my feet they were all saying 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' The Sea-birds were screaming excitedly to each other 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' The winds that were playing with the gum leaves overhead were sighing sadly 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' The huge breakers that were thundering over the distant reef boomed out 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' I turned back to the paper on my knee, but its cry was still the same. Everybody seemed to be wanting something—or wanting somebody who wanted something! In these two hundred and two columns I fancied that I heard one half of the world crying pitifully for the other half; and I saw what Paul meant when he said that we are members one of another.

But the advertisements were not all pathos. In a great romance the elements must be well mingled, and in these myriad romances I found, side by side with the pathos, a vast amount of pride. These thousands of people are all of them in want; they are beggars; but they are haughty beggars. They hold their heads high. George Gissing says that the essential characteristic of the British people is that they believe in themselves. These advertisers most certainly do. Whether it is a merchant advertising for customers or a clerk advertising for a situation, or a landlord advertising for a tenant, the advertise-

ment is dictated by an obvious consciousness of virtue. These people want things; but they make no secret of it that they deserve the things they want. They even suggest that it will be extremely difficult for them to maintain their faith in the justice of the universe should they fail to secure all that they want.

I am not a literary critic, and it would ill become me to find fault with these miniature romances. But I must confess that I felt a certain sense of monotony creeping over me as I turned page after page. The excellencies were so uniform. These people all seemed to be dressed in their Sunday best; I wished that somebody would come along in his working clothes. At agricultural shows it is customary to hold a grand parade. The prize beasts are, at an appointed hour, led round the ring in procession to show off their points. I felt, as these thousands of advertisers passed before me, that I was witnessing some such display. I thought of Gil Blas, and wished that I could find in these printed pages a few such advertisements as those that the queer old scribe read to him out of his register when Gil Blas was seeking employment. 'A footman is wanted for Captain Torbellino, a passionate, cruel, whimsical man, who grumbles incessantly, swears, beats, and commonly maims his servants.' 'Donna Manuela, of Sandoval, a superannuated widow, full of peevishness and caprice, has at present no footman; she keeps only one, and him never a whole day.' 'Doctor Alvar Fannez,

a physician and dentist, wants a servant. His domestics are well fed, handsomely entertained, and have, moreover, great wages; but he tries experiments upon them with his medicines, and there are often vacant places in his house.' What a dash of new interest a few such announcements would have imparted to these pages! I hoped, even to the end of the two hundred and second column, that I should somewhere find one, but, alas, I hoped in vain! The advertisers had all sat at the feet of Mr. Wackford Squeers, and had modelled their intimations on his historic announcement:

'At Mr. Wackford Squeers' Academy, Dotheboys Hall, at the delightful village of Dotheboys, near Greta Bridge in Yorkshire, Youth are boarded, clothed, booked, furnished with pocket-money, provided with all necessaries, instructed in all languages, living and dead, mathematics, orthography, geometry, astronomy, trigonometry, the use of the globes, algebra, single-stick (if required), writing, arithmetic, fortification, and every other branch of classic literature. Terms, twenty guineas per annum. No extras, no vacations, and diet unparalleled.'

Every reader of this delightful intimation will see at a glance that, like all the other advertisements, it is a romance; but as to whether it is the romance of history or the romance of a fertile fancy, *this* is a point that readers of *Nicholas Nickleby* alone can determine.

That is the worst of it. With the larger romances,

such, for instance, as the dainty volumes that adorn the bedroom mantelpiece, you are told on the title-page, or in the preface, whether the narrative is to be regarded as sober fact, or as a frolic of the author's imagination. But with these miniature romances you are left to find out, and the process is sometimes painful. Poor little Nicholas Nickleby thought that the alluring description of Dotheboys Hall was to be regarded as the romance of reality; and the disillusionment was very bitter. Happily, schools of the type of Dotheboys Hall have been wiped from the face of the earth long ago; and we may hope, therefore, that the evil habit of drafting such chimerical advertisements perished at the same time and was buried in the same grave. In the old days—the days that enjoyed a monopoly of this kind of thing—it led to a great deal of disappointment. Even in church life it caused incalculable mischief. Let me quote three entries from John Wesley's Journal. It will be seen that the external form of the habit was slightly different in these days, but that the underlying principle was the same.

March 16, 1748.—*I inquired into the state of the Society here in Dublin. Most pompous accounts had been sent me, from time to time, of the great numbers that were added to it; so that I confidently expected to find therein six or seven hundred members. And how is the real fact? I left three hundred and ninety-four members; and I doubt if there are now three hundred and ninety-six! Let this be*

a warning to us all, how we give in to that hateful custom of painting things beyond the life!

April 29, 1778.—I returned to Cork and met the classes. Oh, when shall we learn not to exaggerate? After all the pompous accounts I had had of the vast increase of the Society, it is not increased at all; nay, it is a little smaller than it was three years ago!

January 21, 1779.—I returned to Norwich, and took an exact account of the Society. I wish all our preachers would be accurate in their accounts, and rather speak under than above the truth. I had heard again and again of the increase of the Society; and what is the naked truth? Why, I left in it two hundred and two members, and I find one hundred and seventy-nine!

I am at a loss as to which of these cases most deserves my pity—the case of Nicholas Nickleby or the case of John Wesley. In both cases the awakening to the truth was extremely painful. In the case of Nicholas Nickleby it was the more acute; but then, as the dates that I have quoted show, John Wesley's unhappy experience lasted much longer. But, after all, it does not very much matter. Let us be thankful that such disappointments as fell to Nicholas Nickleby through relying upon a deceptive advertisement, and such disappointments as came to Mr. Wesley through relying upon church reports, belong to the bad old days that have gone —gone never to come again!

But I have wandered a long, long way from the

paper on my knee. I come back with a start to these thousands of people crying 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' I am told that curiosity is exclusively a feminine prerogative. Perhaps! But I catch myself wondering whether these people in the advertisements ever found the people they were advertising for. Did *this* half of the world find *the other* half? I should like to see the replies they received and the results they achieved. I see now that these thousands of romances, excellent in many respects as they are, are sadly incomplete. The last chapter is missing. I should dearly love to know how it all ended.

And at this point my mind is switched from these romances-in-miniature to the greatest romance-in-miniature that ever was written. And it, too, is a story of 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!'

Wanted, a lost sheep!

Wanted, a lost coin!

Wanted, a lost son!

In these cases, however, I know how it all ended. The shepherd found his wandering sheep; the woman found her missing coin; the father found his prodigal boy. And great was the joy of the finding.

The happiest things in the world are the things that are advertised for—the things that somebody misses, the things that somebody wants. Happy sheep to be wanted by such a shepherd! Happy coin to be wanted by such a searcher! Happy son to be wanted by such a father!

That is what won the heart of Rosalie in *A Peep Behind the Scenes.* She looked wistfully at her picture of 'The Good Shepherd' as it hung in the lumbering old caravan. She read, thousands and thousands of times, the text underneath it: *'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.'* And it seemed to her a thing most wonderful that the Shepherd really wanted the sheep, that the Saviour really wanted *her. 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.'* They are lost—and missed—*and wanted!* 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' 'Wanted!' Happy they who feel the thrill of that divine appreciation! Happy they who know that there is a Heart that aches for want of them! But happiest they who respond to so divine a longing! It is lovely to be missed; lovely to be wanted; but loveliest of all is the joy of being found!

PART III

I

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW

THERE could be no mistake about it, Mosgiel was in the grip of the blizzard. For more than a week the little township had been buried deep in snow, and the storm had as yet given no promise of abatement. Once or twice, during a momentary lull, we had been able to discern the outline of the ranges; they were wrapped, from peaks to foothills, in robes of blinding whiteness. When, in a wan, fitful, half-hearted kind of way, the sun for a second showed his face, the mountains were positively dazzling. And all across the plain, in every direction, fields and farms, hedges and homesteads, were all folded in the same stainless mantle. Never before, in a residence of many years, had I seen the spirit of the Antarctic creep up and lay so firm a hold upon the place.

'It is scarcely worth while going along to the church to-night,' said the mistress of the manse, when Wednesday evening came. 'Nobody will be there. It is an awful night. It isn't fit for a dog to be out.'

I agreed with her, but decided to take no risks. At half-past seven, although the storm was then

at the climax of its fury, I set out into the night. And I was handsomely rewarded for my venture.

At the church I found a congregation of one; and that one was John Havelock. John, as I have explained in an earlier narrative, was a ponderous piece of humanity. He stood well over six feet in height; was an excellent fellow, a staunch friend, and an officer of the church. Prospering in business, as he deserved to do, he had become the proud proprietor of the largest store on the Plain. I could see at a glance, however, that this evening John was in no mood for a frolic. As I stepped into the porch, and shook the snow from my hat and coat, John greeted me dismally. I thought that, in all probability, he was depressed by the difficulty of carrying on his business under the climatic conditions that seemed so persistent. But I soon found that in harbouring this conjecture I was doing him a grave injustice.

John had quite another trouble on his mind. For several years he had been assisted in the shop by a young fellow named Henry Swift. The Swifts were a large family; they were all connected with the church; Mr. Swift was a deacon; and Henry was himself a member. It was five years earlier, when Henry was a boy in John's Sunday-school class, that it had first occurred to John to take him into the shop. It was a masterstroke, and I doubt if John saw all its advantages when he offered Henry the position. Everybody liked Henry, and his popu-

larity grew with the years. John was gloomy and by no means magnetic. Henry was sprightly and cheerful; he had a good joke and a pleasant word for everybody; he was hail-fellow-well-met wherever he happened to be. Nothing was a trouble to him; he took infinite pains to satisfy and please every customer. He went out for orders, studied the people's whims and fancies; and did everything in his power to humour them. The business grew amazingly. John took good care that Henry enjoyed a liberal share of its prosperity; and for five years everything went well.

By this time Henry was twenty. It is a critical age, and his friends should have reflected upon its perils before plying his ears so constantly with reminders of his indispensability to John. They forgot that it was by John's untiring industry that the business had been established; they forgot that all its risks and responsibilities rested, in the last resort, upon his shoulders; they forgot that he had invested in it the savings of long, laborious years. They only remembered Henry's great popularity and John's great profits. Why was Henry content to spend his life in piling up John's fortune? Could he not see that crowds of people only came to the shop because they liked Henry and could count upon his consideration and courtesy? It was to Henry, so these people reasoned, that the customers brought their orders, not to John. It was with Henry that they desired to deal. Henry listened to these

smooth sayings morning, afternoon, and night. They became the commonplaces of every conversation. He would have been more than human if he had ultimately proved superior to such siren voices. He was *not* more than human. As the constant dripping of the softest water will at last wear away the hardest stone, so these soft whisperings at length bore down all his finer feelings and deeper scruples. One Saturday, as they were closing the shop, John handed Henry his salary as usual. Henry said that he wished to speak to John for a minute or two. They walked into the office. Henry made demands upon John which John felt to be utterly unreasonable and unjust. In his own blunt and uncompromising fashion he scornfully rejected Henry's proposals. Henry instantly gave his old master a week's notice to leave his service, and announced his intention of setting up in business in a shop immediately opposite. A fortnight later Havelock's store stood on one side of the main road and Swift's stood facing it defiantly upon the other.

Things had been going on in this way for about three months when the snowstorm broke upon us all. The excitement created by the establishment of the new business had died down; but John was very worried about it still.

'It isn't so much the loss of business,' he said. 'That is scarcely worth talking about. But it gives a fellow a nasty feeling. There's the schism in the church and the scandal in the town. His father and

I are both deacons; and almost everybody in the congregation is having to take sides, either with him or with me. I'm sorry, too, for him. He would never have dreamed of such a thing if people had let him alone. He's a very decent fellow, and was a great help to me. He'll find it harder than he thinks to run alone. He has nothing behind him. If I liked to cut prices and run things finely for a while, I could shut him up in no time. But I mean to give him a fair chance.'

We talked it over whilst we waited for the congregation that never came.

'I've a good mind to speak to Henry,' I said. I might be able to arrange for him to see you.'

But John was afraid that I should be regarded as his ambassador.

'Better leave it,' he said, as we parted at the gate and plunged into the snow-drifts along opposite paths. 'I'll think it over and come up to the manse for a yarn!'

But Henry got there first! We were sitting at the fire next evening when the bell rang. Visitors had been few and far between since the snow came, and we looked at each other in surprise. Then I thought of John, and went to the door myself. To my astonishment, however, it was Henry! I took him into the study.

He began, as such visitors usually do, by pledging me to confidence, especially requesting that I should breathe no word to John of his visit to me.

'I'm afraid I've made a bad mistake,' he began, 'and I don't quite know how to put things right. I ought never to have set up in opposition to Mr. Havelock. But I was silly enough to listen to all that people said. And then he made me angry with him. I don't suppose he meant anything, but his awkward way of saying and doing things sometimes hurts even those who know him best. It came to a head suddenly; and, before I realized what I was doing, I found myself behind the counter of my own shop. But it's a silly game, anyway. It has made a lot of bad blood in the church; it has set half the town by the ears; and, to make matters worse, there's nothing in it. I have been disappointed at every turn. The people who talked most have done the least to help me. The people who deal with me are the people who want long credit, which I can't afford to give. The expenses of running the business are far greater than I had anticipated. And I find myself badly handicapped when it comes to buying. I had taken it for granted that I could buy from the wholesale houses just as Mr. Havelock did. But then, I don't need his quantities, and I haven't his capital behind me, and that makes all the difference. If he liked, he could undersell me on almost everything, and still make bigger profits than I am doing. To make a long story short, I'm sick of the whole thing; but I can't see how to get out of it!'

It was a bitterly cold night. The study fire had

been allowed to go out when I left tne room at dinner-time; and I thought wistfully of the cosy fire I had left in the dining-room. Why not take Henry through? Happily, it occurred to me to go myself first and make sure the coast was clear. As I walked up the hall I was surprised at hearing the murmur of voices; and, on opening the dining-room door, I found that John was occupying the chair that I had forsaken. He had come across the fields to the back door, and I had thus had no intimation of his arrival. A woman's insight is a wonderful thing. As I entered the room somebody else slipped out, and by the time I re-entered the study a bright fire was burning there. Whilst it was being lit I leaned against the mantelpiece and talked to John, apologizing for the fact that I should be for a little while engaged.

'It's all right,' he said. 'I'm in no hurry, and this is very comfortable. When you're disengaged I want to have a word with you about the business we were discussing last night. I should like to get it fixed up, and I wouldn't mind losing money over it; but I still feel that our future relationships with each other could not rest on any permanently satisfactory basis if I go cap in hand to him. If I eat humble-pie now, I may have to eat it all the time. But don't let me keep you. Go back and attend to your visitor, and later on we'll try to find a way out!'

By this time the chair opposite him was again occupied; the ticking of the clock mingled with the

clicking of knitting-needles; and I slipped back to the study.

I tried hard to persuade Henry to go to John and make a clean breast of it. But he could not screw up his courage to that pitch. He drew from his pocket a sheaf of papers showing his purchases, sales, assets, liabilities, and stock-in-hand. I offered to discuss the matter with John; but he said at once that that would never do. John would see in a twinkling that I had been asked to come. In the course of the evening I once or twice excused myself and went through to the other room. I dared not tell either that the other was in the house, and yet I knew their hearts well enough to perceive that nothing was more desirable than that they should meet. As the evening wore on, the embarrassment of the position grew upon me; and I began to wonder how it was going to end.

It ended, as such situations usually do, in a way that nobody could have foreseen. I was sitting with Henry in the study, John and the mistress of the manse were chatting by the dining-room fire, when, suddenly, we were all startled by a terrific crash and a piercing scream. In a second we had all rushed pell-mell into the hall—the direction from whence these fearful sounds proceeded. The mystery was soon explained. My footsteps in the hall, as I passed restlessly from one room to the other, had awakened one of the children. Creeping from her bed, she had set out upon a journey of investigation. The

first object that captivated her fancy was the lamp in the hall. Climbing on to the seat of the hall-stand, she had stretched out her hand to grasp it, had lost her balance, and had fallen, carrying the lamp with her!

For just a moment her terror and possible injuries absorbed all our thought. And then, as soon as she had been calmed and reassured, a much more delicate situation emerged. For here in the hall were both Henry and John! They first looked sheepishly at each other, and then turned to me for an explanation.

'Well,' I said, 'you two fellows have brought this on yourselves. You entrusted me with your confidences, and I have respected them, both in the letter and the spirit. Neither of you has the slightest idea as to what the other has said to me. Neither of you would have known, but for this accident, that I was in touch with the other. And now, in this unceremonious fashion, you have rushed uninvited out of the rooms in which I placed you into this hall! I can have nothing further to do with you! If it hadn't been for you my wife and I would have spent a pleasant evening by the dining-room fire. Now that you have abused our hospitality in this unpardonable way, we shall go back to the dining-room fire together. No man can be expected to keep secrets, under such conditions. You will find a second fire burning in the study, and if you take my advice, you two will go in there for a while

and make the most of each other's society. Go on!'

I have no idea as to what happened in the study. I only know that, when supper was taken in to them, they were poring over the papers that Henry had brought in his pocket. An hour later they came through and smilingly bade us good-night. Each shook my hand very warmly, and they set off side by side into the snow. Next morning I saw them both hard at work carrying the stores across the road from the smaller shop to the larger one. And, before so very long, the name on the smaller shop-front followed the stores. For reasons that I have outlined in 'John Havelock's Escape,' John had soon after to sell out and devote all his time and energy to Davie, his little blind boy. When that day came, he made it easy for Henry to become proprietor of the business; and the name that had for a few weeks stood over the small shop on one side of the road has now stood for many a long year over the larger store on the other.

II

THE SIGNET-RING

I

'DADDY,' she cried, as she came bounding into her father's study one morning to tell him that dinner was ready, 'daddy, there's one text that I find in my Bible whenever I read it. It seems to be everywhere. I've seen it heaps of times; yet you never preach on it. Why don't you?'

'But what's the text, lassie?' he asked, as he stroked back the flaxen curls with one hand, and prepared to shut down his desk with the other.

'Why,' she replied, jumping on to his knee and throwing her arms round his neck, 'whenever I open my Bible it keeps saying *"And it came to pass, "It came to pass," "It came to pass."* You've never preached on that text, have you, daddy?'

He never had; and he promised her that, when he came back into the study, he would think about it. And he did.

II

And when he came to think about it, it seemed to him that life was like a busy port. From every part of the world tall ships were coming in. For every

part of the world tall ships were going out. No vessel remained long in port; they were always arriving and departing. Indeed, they only sailed in that they might sail out again. They arrived to depart. They came to pass. And by their sailing in and their sailing out, their arriving and their departing, their coming and their passing, the port prospers. Which things are an allegory.

III

One of the strangest cases known to medical science is the case of the brothers Mist. They were two queer little old men who dwelt side by side in the pair of cottages near the lighthouse. The two brothers are just about the same size; in outward appearance they are as much alike as two peas; they are both partially blind. Yet, with all these points of similarity, they are as different from each other as two men can possibly be. They dwell on the green hillside overlooking the harbour, and they love to spend their time in watching the ships. But, oddly enough, the nature of their blindness is such that each can only see the ships that move in one direction. Old Mr. Opty Mist, a jolly old fellow, claps his hands as he sees the ships come in. 'Here comes another!' he exclaims, with a chuckle, as he sees them arrive, and he goes off into transports of glee. Never by any chance does he see a ship go out! It is an extraordinary defect, and no oculist has been able to understand it. His brother's malady is just

as baffling, and much more distressing. Poor old Mr. Pessy Mist, a grumpy old soul, is afflicted in an exactly opposite way. He sits outside his front door, moping and sighing as he watches the great ships put out to sea. 'There goes another!' he cries sadly, as he sees them depart, and he sinks into a perfect paroxysm of despair. Never by any chance does he see a ship come in! It would give old Mr. Opty Mist a saner and soberer view of life if he sometimes caught a glimpse of the tall ships sailing outwards. And it would be like a burst of sunshine to Mr. Pessy Mist if he were occasionally to catch sight of a big ship coming in. But neither sees life whole.

'They come! *They come!*' cries Mr. Opty Mist in glee.

'They pass! *They pass!*' moans Mr. Pessy Mist in gloom.

Neither sees that they come and pass; indeed, that they come to pass. Some day an oculist will arise with the skill to repair their strangely defective vision, and in healing their treacherous eyes he will be the salvation of them both.

IV

The arrivals constitute half the life of the port—and half the life of life! Days arrive; joys arrive; friends arrive! Love arrives; wealth arrives; fame arrives! Every hour is made romantic by its expected and unexpected arrivals. Some things come

like ships that have been long upon the waters. Their coming had been long announced. And then, all at once, we see them lying in the stream! Our faith has been justified; it came to pass. Other things come suddenly, startlingly, dramatically, like ships that come into port without previous warning. But whether they come as the fulfilment of a long-cherished anticipation, or whether they come as a sweet and glad surprise, they come! Life is full of arrivals.

The departures constitute the other half of the life of the port—and the other half of the life of life! Things come—to pass! Some things stay an hour; some a day, some a week; some a month; but sooner or later, as Mr. Pessy Mist so truly says to himself a hundred times a day, they all pass!

Once in Persia reigned a king
Who upon his signet-ring
Graved a maxim true and wise,
Which, if held before his eyes,
Gave him counsel at a glance,
Fit for every change and chance;
Solemn words, and these are they:
'Even this shall pass away.'

Trains of camels through the sand
Brought him gems from Samarcand;
Fleets of galleys through the seas
Brought him pearls to match with these.
But he counted not his gain,
Treasures of the mine or main;
'What is wealth?' the king would say,
'Even this shall pass away.'

Fighting on a furious field,
Once a javelin pierced his shield,
Soldiers, with a loud lament,
Bore him bleeding to his tent;
Groaning from his tortured side,
'Pain is hard to bear,' he cried,
'But with patience, day by day,
'Even this shall pass away.'

Struck with palsy, sere and old,
Waiting at the gates of gold,
Said he, with his dying breath,
'Life is done, but what is death?'
Then, in answer to the king,
Fell a sunbeam on his ring,
Showing by a heavenly ray,
'Even this shall pass away.'

V

And now I must make a confession. I have no hard things to say about the two old men who live on the banks of the bay, for I lived there once myself and was almost as blind as they. It is true that I saw the ships both coming and going; but it was a long time before I saw the real significance of their passing to and fro. And then, one day, my eyes were opened! I made two great discoveries, which I am now about to set down. I discovered that the ships never go as they come; and I discovered that they never leave the port as they find it. Heraclitus once said that it is impossible for a man to cross a river twice. In the first place the river is not the

same river; and, in the second place, the man is not the same man. The water that he crossed the first time has been poured into the sea, and other water from the hills has taken its place by the time that he comes back to the banks of the stream. And, in the second place, he is himself a wiser or a more foolish man; he is a better or a worse man; he is another man and older man than when he stood on the same spot before. Our lives are all arrivals and departures; things come that they may pass; but nothing passes as it came, and nothing leaves us as it found us.

VI

Nothing passes as it came. The ships that pass are the ships that came, but they have more passengers or fewer passengers or different passengers; they have more cargo or less cargo or different cargo. Life is full of arrivals—and departures. But the things that depart are the better or the worse for having visited us. A very pathetic story is told by the author of *The Next Street But One*. 'Once, when I was a very small child,' he says, 'I was taken to dine at an old-fashioned London restaurant. It was a stifling hot day, and even strawberries and cream soon ceased to interest me. While my elders lingered over them, I slipped from my seat to gratify my curiosity as to what might be behind a great screen from which a subdued but never-

ceasing clatter of crockery proceeded. I saw a girl, —even to me she seemed a mere child, drab-coloured from head to foot, washing a pile of plates nearly as high as herself at a sink; other piles stood near her, and every few minutes the waiters brought a fresh supply, and fetched away those she had washed. I returned to my seat, and told no one what I had seen; but from that moment I knew what was meant by drudgery, and that hopeless, drab-coloured toiler always rises before my eyes as its mental symbol.' And yet, is there not a cheerier view even of this drab spectacle? Is it not worth noticing that the plates were not merely coming—to pass? They did not pass as they came. They came dirty; they passed clean. I fancy that many of our drudgeries would become luminous if we brightened them with that reflection.

Does not the same law hold true of our friendships—the happy groups that form and then, in a few years, break up again?

Scattered to east and west and north,
  Some with a light heart, some with a stout,
Each to the battle of life goes forth,
  And all along we must fight it out.
Not in the sunshine, not in the rain,
  Not in the night of the stars untold,
Shall we ever all meet again,
  Or be as we were in the days of old.
But, as ships pass and more cheerily go
  For having changed greetings upon the sea,
So I am the better for you, I know,
  And you, I trust, are no poorer for me.

VII

Things do not pass as they came; nor do they leave us as they find us. Did I not say at the outset that by the coming and going of the ships the port prospers? Things come and they go; but we are the better for their visit.

> 'Tis better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all.

The sun rises, and the sun sets; it comes to pass; but all the earth has been revived by its shining. The rain falls and then trickles away, leaving the earth dry; it comes to pass; but everything has been refreshed by the shower. Men live and die; they come to pass; but they leave the world the better for their presence in it. All things come—to pass; but, on passing, they do not leave us as they found us. That is the way in which God is for ever and for ever enriching His world.

Things come to pass! Surely that reflection should sanctify every arrival. The day will pass; I must make the most of it! The friend will pass; let me say nothing that will embitter the memory of him. I shall pass; let me live whilst I live!

Things come to pass! Surely that reflection should endear each survivor! Many days have slipped away; there is no profit in bewailing their loss; I must permit the thought of them to impart a new preciousness to the day that is still my own!

Friends drop into their graves; they are gone beyond recall; I must cling the more fondly to those that survive. The pleasures that have passed must add a new and sacred sweetness to the pleasures that are passing! The flowers that have faded must lend a richer fragrance to the flowers still in the field!

VIII

'It came to pass.' Not everything! Two words the Mohammedan inscribes upon the tombstone of his friend. *'He remains.'* He means that, let who will come and go, Allah abides. The love of God does not pass. And everything that is enfolded in that eternal love becomes transmuted into its own essence, and becomes as deathless as itself. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His immutability is contagious, for he that liveth and believeth in Him shall never die; he too liveth and abideth for ever! There are the things that *come to pass,* and there are the things that come to *pass no more.* The things that come to pass are the things that enrich us in passing; the things that can never pass away are our eternal and unexplorable heritage.

III

THE CITY OF THE APES

SINBAD THE SAILOR came to the City of the Apes. It was an extraordinary adventure. The City of the Apes was by the side of the sea. The inhabitants lived in a state of terror. For the apes from the hills around invaded the city every night. Towards evening the frightened citizens all put to sea and spent the night upon the waters. With the dawn the apes returned to the forests and the people to their homes. In order to refresh my memory, I have taken down the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* and have read the great story all over again. But the only difference that I have been able to detect between Sinbad's city and the cities that I have myself visited is that, in Sinbad's city, the apes all left in the morning! For the ape is the father of us all. I do not mean this in the Darwinian sense; I mean it in my own. The ape, I confidently repeat, is the father of us all. I came to this conclusion yesterday. I was out-back in a motor. Away we went, through a perfect fairyland of forestry. We paused for lunch under the refreshing shadow of a spreading wattle. And sitting there, we were astonished at the multiplicity

and variety of bird-songs that came up to us from the gulley down by the creek. Moreover, all the birds seemed to be singing in the one bush, for the sounds all came from the same spot. Then all at once, the truth broke upon us, and we burst into laughter. A lyre-bird was entertaining us with his clever imitations of all the songs he had ever heard!

For the lyre-bird is an ape, as most birds are. Indeed, other birds are more apish than he, for, whilst he confines his performance to the songs that he steals from the repertoire of his feathered neighbours, they, some of them, attempt to mimic such of the beasts as have won their admiration. Even the ostrich, the largest of all birds, sets a bad example in this particular. The ostriches that dwell among the great African solitudes are as silent as the veldt over which they roam. But the ostriches that live in the vicinity of lions soon acquire a leonine roar. The huge bird admires the terrifying sound emitted by the king of beasts, and, in his feeble way, does his best to ape it. The jay tries hard at times to bleat like a lamb, and to neigh like a horse. The bunting copies the call of the pipit; the greenfinches steal the notes of the yellow-hammers; and the starling impersonates the cuckoo. Even the nightingale is guilty of occasional plagiarism. Like the lyre-bird down by the creek, he is an ape; so are the magpies and parrots that we frightened from the fences as we came along. So are we all.

Yes, so are we all—we humans especially. We

are the greatest apes on the planet. Our poorer relatives of the brute creation owe a good deal of their sagacity to instinct; but for some inscrutable reason we learn very little at that school. We owe almost everything to our cleverness as mimics. As soon as we open our eyes we begin to imitate every gesture that attracts our attention. A child apes everything he sees. You take him for a drive, and for the next week he plays at horses from morning to night; everybody, from his baby sister up to his grandmother, has to go into harness at his behest. You take him in a railway-train, and for a week afterwards all the chairs are drawn up as railway carriages, whilst he is himself the engine, puffing and screaming without a moment's intermission. As Professor Drummond has pointed out, the very language that we speak is frankly an imitation. The child calls the cow a moo-moo; the dog a bow-wow; the duck a quack-quack; the rooster a cock-a-doodle-doo; the clock a tick-tick; the train a puff-puff; and the rest. His father is scarcely any better. He talks of the hum of the bee; the click of the gate; the whir of machinery; the chirp of the grasshopper; the twitter of the sparrow; the hiss of the snake; the boom of cannon; the roar of thunder; the tramp of armies; and so on. We imitate everything.

Here and there you will find a man who plumes himself on his originality; but, when you investigate his claims, you find that, whilst he is showing some

feeble sign of individualistic tendencies at one point, he is aping at a thousand. He curls his tail round the branches of the cocoanut-tree like every other ape, but he twists it round in a slightly different way. That is as far as originality ever goes. Take Robinson Crusoe for example. Robinson Crusoe has been called the greatest original in our literature. Defoe tried hard to make him such. He was to be the type of 'the true-born Englishman'—audacious, self-reliant, energetic, and, above all, original. Yet probe the matter a little more deeply. Scratch a Russian, somebody says, and you find a Tartar. Scratch this very original character, this Crusoe of ours, and you find the ape. For this very individualistic figure who, every hour of his life, does things as they never were done before, is, in the soul of him, a mimic. The respects in which he digresses from the established type are inconsiderable as compared with the respects in which he conforms to the established type. 'How many people were there on Robinson Crusoe's island?' one of the philosophers asked not so very long ago. Crusoe seems to be alone, but is he really alone? Is he not attended by all from whom he had ever learned, by all whom he had ever watched, by all whom he imitated? But for that element of imitation, could Crusoe have survived the ordeal to which he was submitted? It was because he was essentially an ape that he lived through it.

But let us come to closer grips. Up to this point

I have been mainly biological; but the biological aspect of the matter by no means exhausts it. Thirty years ago, rather more, Friedrich Nietzsche read all that Schmid, Nageli, and others had to say about mimicry in Nature, and came to the conclusion that something more remained to be said. And then Nietzsche raised a truly terrific question. Does not the ape within the soul of a man taint and distort his morality? Is it not possible that, just as many animals, in order not to be seen by their enemies, imitate and assume the colour of their environment, so man, through fear of enemies, may adopt the moral opinions of the crowd? Is it not possible, Nietzsche asked, for the ape in the soul of a man to enslave the conscience of the man? 'As a matter of fact,' he says, 'conscience often condemns an action, not because it is wrong in itself, but because it has been customary for some long period of time to condemn it; conscience merely imitates.' And, with characteristic severity, Nietzsche proceeds to divide men into two classes—Masters and Slaves. The Masters are those who are of such intellectual and moral vigour that they are able to model their conduct on their own clear judgements; the Slaves are those who simply accept, without qualm or question, the moral convictions of the multitude. The Masters have caged the ape; the Slaves have enthroned him.

The principle applies to our methods as forcibly as to our morals. Robert Louis Stevenson thought

that the Church's programme of world-conquest was largely ineffective because missionary copies missionary; the missionaries of one age copy the methods of the previous age; the missionaries among South Sea Islanders follow the lines adopted in China or India; the Church abroad imitates too slavishly the conduct of the Church at home. It is all a piece of ecclesiastical mimicry. Stevenson loved Chalmers, the Great-heart of New Guinea, because he was so entirely free from all taint of this. 'He is as big as a house,' Stevenson writes, 'and far bigger than any church. He is the sworn foe of conventionality. He is quite free from the formal, from the grimace.' There was nothing of the ape about him. In his *Up from Slavery* Booker Washington has a sentence to the same effect. 'Too often,' he says, 'in missionary and educational work among undeveloped races people yield to the temptation of doing that which was done a hundred years before, or is being done in other communities a thousand miles away.' The ape is a persistent beast; he asserts himself everywhere.

Yes, everywhere! He can leap any barrier, bound through any window, climb to any roof. His agility is marvellous. Of all the beasts he is the most impudent, the most nimble, the most intrusive. We have seen him in the field and in the forest; we have seen him in society and in school; we have seen him in the mission-house; and, if we had eyes that could look within, we should even see him in the

soul. Some years ago a most extraordinary book was written in Denmark, and speedily translated into nearly every European language. It is entitled *Letters from Hell.* The English edition contains an introduction from the pen of George MacDonald, who expresses his desire to see the book in every British home. Among its weird imaginations is a conversation, lasting over thousands of years, between the devil and the devil's grandmother. As he moves about his infernal kingdom, the devil is always propounding to himself one terrible question: How can the image of God be extinguished in the sons of men? In a dark corner of hell sits the old crone, the devil's grandmother. She is knitting, always knitting, knitting toils and looping snares with which to catch the unguarded and the unwary. Every few centuries a brilliant suggestion occurs either to the devil or to his grandmother, and they sit together discussing it. But, every time, they come to the conclusion that the scheme is not sufficiently subtle. Souls are not so easily ruined. At last, however, the devil is more successful. 'Once more he returned to his aged relative; he looked worn and in need of a tonic. His grandmother, strange to say, had finished her knitting, nets and snares in untold quantity being ready for ages to come. She sat twiddling her thumbs.

'"I have it!" cried the devil, as he rushed excitedly into the presence of the withered old hag. "I have it! *I will make an ape of him.*"

'"It is a bright idea!" cried the she-fiend; and they danced together in their glee.'

'I will make an ape of him!' said the Tempter; and from that time to this the souls of men have been ruined by being taught to imitate, to mimic, to counterfeit, to copy.

'I will make an ape of him!' said the Tempter, as he gazed on one of the Church's earliest and most promising converts. Among the thousands who crowded into the Kingdom on the day of Pentecost were a young married couple. You might have searched the world in vain for a happier home than theirs. Life became wealthy beyond all words; and their home was a foretaste of heaven. How was such bliss to be shattered?

'I will make an ape of him!' said the Tempter.

And one day this happy husband and this happy wife went, as their custom was, to the gathering of the infant Church. And it happened that, that day, Peter and John told of the miracle at the Beautiful Gate; and of the excitement that it caused; and of their brief imprisonment; and of their triumphant acquittal. And the meeting was transformed first into a praise-meeting and then into a prayer-meeting. 'And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.' It was one of the golden experiences of the infant Church. Our young husband and his happy bride entered to the

full into the rapture of it. Barnabas, another of the disciples, was so moved by the exultation of that never-to-be-forgotten day that, having sold a piece of land, he brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. And the apostles praised him for his noble gift; and our young couple went to their transfigured home that night with those words of praise ringing in their ears.

'I will make apes of them!' said the Tempter; for they too had a piece of land. And so, with those words of praise still ringing in their ears, they went next day and sold their land as Barnabas had sold his; and, like Barnabas, they too brought the money —or part of it—and laid it at the apostles' feet. They brought a part, and pretended that it was the whole! And they waited to hear such words of praise spoken of them as had been spoken the day before of Barnabas.

'But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God!'

And that day, the day after the Church's first triumph, came the Church's first tragedy! Ananias and Sapphira were carried out and buried in a desolate spot just outside the city. And there the grass grew long and rank over their dishonoured

graves; and every man who passed by picked up a stone and threw it contemptuously at their resting-place. And thus the light of that lovely home was quenched. And when the names of Ananias and Sapphira were removed from the roll of the infant Church, all those who were gathered together prayed in silence that they might each be saved from the melancholy fate of the mimic.

IV

THE HEARTHSTONE

Jean McTaggart was only a poor old Scottish body, who, in the days of the great Disruption, lived in a small cottage at Blairgowrie. The members who, with their minister, had seceded from the Auld Kirk, were faithful, but they were few; and none of them were wealthy. It was very difficult to find a building in which they could worship; and, even in the bleakest and bitterest weather, the services were often held in the open air. In the moving records of those stern, heroic days, have we not read of congregations that gathered in the snow-clad valleys and the frozen fields; of peoples who lifted their psalms of praise to heaven whilst the pitiless rain was lashing their upturned faces; and of devout men who, rather than betray their consciences or forsake their worship, stood muffled and bareheaded in the raging storm? Eventually this little handful of Blairgowrie folk managed to purchase a small section of land; but even then, the day seemed a long way off in which they should have a kirk of their own. To begin with, there were no quarry stones with which they could build one. They determined, however, to do their best with the

material at their disposal. They set to work with any rubble that came to hand, and all went well until they came to the lintel stone for the door. Then they stuck fast and could not finish. One day, however, the minister, in calling upon Jean, found a strange surprise awaiting him. With pokers and shovels and such poor tools as were at her disposal, Jean had contrived to tear the hearthstone out of its place in front of her sitting-room fire, and she pointed to it proudly as the minister entered.

'A've been doon to the wee bit kirk in the field,' she explained, 'an' a've measured the place where yon lintel-stane's to go, and I find that it's just the size o' yon hearthstane; so a've pulled up the hearthstane, and ye're to hae it sent doon to the kirk and pit up ower the door, ye ken?' It was joyfully accepted; and Dr. David Smith says that long after, when a fine new church was erected in place of the crude structure of those cruel times, Jean's hearthstone was given the premier place in the later and more elegant building. Which things are an allegory. More often than we sometimes think, the hearthstone from the chimney-corner becomes the foundation-stone of the Church.

That is why the wisest of the old churchmen kept a vigilant eye on the hearthstone. They knew that, unless religion flourished by the fireside, it must present but a sickly countenance at the church. There lie on my desk at this moment two classical ministerial biographies—Dean Boyle's *Life of Richard*

Baxter and Dr. Andrew Thomson's *Life of Thomas Boston.* The noble records of our great English ministries can furnish nothing finer than the story of Baxter's wealthy ministry at Kidderminster, whilst even Scottish history may be ransacked in vain for a more heroic or gracious entry than the record of Boston's memorable ministry at Ettrick. As the two books lie before me, and their contents pass before my mind, I am impressed by three sets of parallel experiences: (1) When Baxter first entered Kidderminster he was appalled at the ignorance, the profanity and the gross immorality of his parishioners. Boston had a precisely similar experience. The impure and disorderly lives of the members of his little congregation were a stain upon their religion and a scandal to the church; his parish resembled an unploughed field overgrown by a riot of tangled weeds; it was only by appointing his elders to a kind of police duty that he could obtain a silence in which his sermons could be heard; and it was three years before he would hold a communion service in Ettrick. (2) In each case the habits of the people were simply revolutionized. Kidderminster and Ettrick became like fair and fragrant gardens. The Communion Services in each place were crowded by hundreds of eager and devout worshippers; and, from the two towns, there flowed forth streams of sacred influences by which the whole world has been enriched. And (3) in each case the transformation was largely effected

by means of family worship. 'When I came thither first,' writes Baxter in his account of Kidderminster, 'there was about one family in a street that worshipped God; when I came away there were some streets in which there was not one family that did not do so.' And Boston uses almost the same words of his Scottish people. From the beginning of his first ministry he conducted family worship at the manse every morning, and invited any members of the congregation who cared to do so to be present. Several of the farm-folk came across the fields to join in that act of domestic devotion; and, learning its value, established altars of their own. Dr. Alexander Whyte tells us that few things have impressed him more than the care with which the minister at Ettrick prepared for this sacred exercise of family worship. 'It was such a continual blessing, both to himself and to his household,' says Dr. Whyte, 'because he honestly prepared himself for the exercise. Boston never rang the worship-bell, morning nor night, till he had read the Scripture passage to himself, and had prepared little questions out of it to put to his children and to his servants, not forgetting his occasional guests. He prepared little explanations, too; as also his family-altar prayer out of the psalm that was sung and out of the Scripture that was read. And this devout habit of Boston's was so fruitful and so famous that his fellow-ministers used to plot how to spend a night under Boston's roof so as to be with him at his

family worship.' And so it came to pass that at Kidderminster in the seventeenth century, and at Ettrick in the eighteenth, the hearthstone from the chimney-corner became the foundation-stone of the Church. When a lamp was kindled in every home, and the happy people bore its radiance with them to the sanctuary, it was no wonder that the house of prayer became luminous and full of glory.

For a concrete instance of what I mean, the best example known to me is the case of the Patons. James and Janet Paton dwelt in a cottage on a farm at Braehead, near Dumfries, and had eleven children. The most famous of the eleven was Dr. J. G. Paton, the apostle of the New Hebrides. His life-story is one of our great missionary classics. To me the most interesting chapter in such a biography is always the first. It is like watching the grey dawn stealing over the silent hills. It is so fascinating to mark the genesis of grace in a great soul. In Dr. Paton's case the light came by means of no minister, no sermon, no book, no text. He says that he and all his brothers and sisters were led to love the church because the religion of the home was so alluring. As a boy he used to crouch outside the little room into which his father entered for his devotions, and listen—his presence all unsuspected—to his father's prayers. 'Never,' he says, 'in temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is more near, more visibly walking and talking with men, than under that

humble cottage roof of thatch and oaken wattles. Though everything else in religion were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory, my soul would wander back to those early scenes, and would shut itself up once again in that sanctuary closet, and, hearing still the echoes of those cries to God, would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal, *"He* walked with God; why may not *I?"* ' From the age of seventeen James Paton—the father of the illustrious missionary—conducted family worship, first in the home of his parents, and afterwards in his own. 'And so,' says his distinguished son, writing many years later, 'and so began in his seventeenth year that blessed custom of family prayer, morning and evening, which my father practised, probably without one single avoidable omission, till he lay on his death-bed, seventy-seven years of age; when even to the last day of his life, a portion of the Scripture was read; and his voice was heard softly joining in the psalm, and his lips breathed the morning and evening prayer—falling in sweet benediction on the heads of all his children, far away many of them all over the earth, but all meeting him there at the Throne of Grace. None of us can remember that any day ever passed unhallowed thus; no hurry for market, no rush to business, no arrival of friends or guests, no trouble or sorrow, no joy or excitement, ever prevented us from at least kneeling around the family altar, while the high-priest led our prayers to God, and offered himself and his children there.

And blessed to others as well as to ourselves was the light of such example.'

'There were eleven of us,' Dr. Paton says again, 'brought up in a home like that,' and all of them came to think the church the dearest spot on earth, and the Lord's Day the brightest day of all the week. 'In this world or in any world'—so he closes that first chapter—'all the children of James and Janet Paton will rise up at mention of their names and call them blessed.'

A good deal that is wise, and a good deal that is otherwise, is talked about the calls that certain men receive to the Christian ministry. But I know one man who has most certainly received a divine call. Whatever may be the case with others, to this man has been committed the cure of souls. For he is a father; and if a father is not divinely charged with the salvation of his children, there can be no such thing as a 'call' in this world or in any other. I mentioned Dr. Whyte a moment ago. Let me revert to him. He is lecturing now on Timothy. How great was the privilege of Paul in being made the means of Timothy's conversion! And yet, and yet, what about Timothy's mother? 'I feel,' he says, 'for Eunice especially, that she was not blessed of God to bear her son in his second birth as well as in his first birth. Speaking for myself, I would value above all else that God can give me in this world to see all my children truly converted like Timothy. And I would rejoice to receive their conversion

through any instrumentality that it pleases God to employ: a new minister; a passing-by evangelist; a good book; a dispensation of providence; or what not. But, oh, if it pleases God, let me have all my children's souls *myself!* Let them all say in after days, "It was *my father* that did it!" That would make my cup run over indeed!' And, in still another lecture, Dr. Whyte quotes, with evident delight, from a letter that the postman one day brought him. 'An old class-mate of mine,' he says, 'wrote me a letter which begins in this way: "Dear Friend,—My last boy is in Christ, and he came to his Saviour at our family worship!" ' I can understand the joy of the Doctor in receiving the letter; but think of the emotions of the man who wrote it!

It is a far cry from such scenes as those that we have been visiting to the House of Lords. But my reference to one letter reminds me of another. When Lord Roberts died, Lord Curzon paid an eloquent tribute in the House to the strength, the tenderness, and the beauty of the great General's character. And then he drew from his pocket a letter. 'Only a little more than a fortnight ago,' he said, 'I received a letter from Lord Roberts, the last he ever wrote to me, in which, amidst the trials of this war, whilst busily occupied in providing for the comfort of our troops in the field, and whilst all his larger thoughts were turned with anxiety to the issues of the campaign, he nevertheless found time to write to me a strong plea in defense of fam-

ily prayer. These were his words: "We have had family prayers for fifty-five years. Our chief reason is that they bring the household together in a way that nothing else can. Then it ensures the servants and others who may be in the house joining in prayers, which, for one reason or another, they may have omitted saying by themselves. Since the war began we usually read prayers, and when anything important has occurred I tell those present about it. In this way I have found that the servants are taking a great interest in what is going on in France. We have never given any order about prayers; attendance is quite optional; but as a rule all the servants, men and women, come regularly on hearing the bell ring." ' Putting these two letters side by side, like the two books lying on my desk—the letter read by Dr. Whyte from his Edinburgh pulpit and the letter read by Lord Curzon from his place in the House of Lords—it really begins to look as if the hearthstone is not only the foundation-stone of the Church, but the foundation-stone of the Empire. All real greatness, all enduring glory, begins there. 'The foundations of national glory,' said the King on his ascension, 'the foundations of national glory are set in the homes of the people.' As I read these two letters I can very easily believe it.

Thomas and Edward Ponsford were carpenters and builders. Although they were young, and had not been long in business, they owned a little property, including the tumble-down old cottage that

years ago had been their home. Edward was about to be married, and it was arranged that they should demolish the cottage and build a more handsome residence on the site. The time came to commence operations. The cottage had been let for years, and neither of them had entered it. Now, as they stepped inside, a rush of recollections swept over them, and it seemed an act of sacrilege to lay violent hands upon their earliest home. They set to work, however, and all went well until they came to the little room that had served in the old days as kitchen and living-room. They were amazed at the multitude of tender memories that clustered about the boards and rafters. Every footstep seemed to awaken the echoes of the long ago. Presently they caught themselves resting from their toil and looking meaningly at each other. They had come to that part of the floor on which the old kitchen-table had stood. They thought of the time when they and the other members of the household had sat around it laughing and chattering in the exuberant merriment of childhood. And they remembered, too, that every evening after tea they had kneeled around it. They could see their sister going for the well-worn Bible, and laying it beside their father's plate. They could hear again the accents of the old man's voice as he poured out his heart in prayer for each of his children. They recalled with a pang the fact that, in the later years, they had considered themselves a little superior to this time-honoured custom,

and had made excuses for leaving before prayers began. And now they were about to tear up the hearthstone and the boards on which their father had so often knelt! They stood looking at each other, and each read the other's thoughts. It was Edward who broke the silence.

'We're better off than he was, Tom,' he said, 'but we're not better men than he was, eh?'

Tom looked assent, and Edward went on:

'I tell you what it is, Tom, we've got side-tracked. I'm going back to the old church and the old ways; and in the new home that I build here I mean to make room for worship, as dad did.'

Tom said nothing; but they both acted upon Edward's resolve; and, as in the case of Jean McTaggart, of Blairgowrie, the old hearthstone became the foundation-stone of a newer, richer life.

V

THE SECOND GLANCE

THEY were sitting together on the lawn—Simpson and Jones.

'I say,' exclaimed Simpson, moved to sudden speech by an abrupt wave of recollection. 'I say, I was walking up Elizabeth Street this afternoon when I happened to meet a young lady, charmingly dressed, but with a face so beautiful that I could not help turning a second time to look at it!'

'But you had no right to steal that second glance,' replied the less susceptible Jones. 'Put yourself in the girl's place. Suppose that everybody she meets behaves as you did. If everybody were to turn and gaze a second time, her afternoon walk would be intolerable. She would have to veil her face, like an Oriental beauty, in sheer self-protection!'

They appealed to me; but I could only plead that the matter lay quite outside the sphere of my jurisdiction. Had I been pressed, I fancy that, moved perhaps by the compassion that we all feel for the person accused, I should have decided in favour of Simpson. And I have discovered since that I should have been able to appeal to very high authorities in fortification of such a judgement.

For last night, after everybody else had gone to bed, I lingered for a little while beside the fire. It always seems like a flagrant discourtesy to leave a cosy fire on a chilly night. I took down a book. There are some books that you can pick up when you will and open anywhere. Last night I reached down *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-table*, and opened, at haphazard, at about the middle. To my surprise I found the garrulous 'Autocrat' discussing with some warmth the very problem that Simpson and Jones had debated on the lawn. 'There are some very pretty but, unhappily, very ill-bred women,' says the 'Autocrat' a little severely, 'who don't understand the law of the road with regard to handsome faces.' And then he goes on to say that 'Nature and custom would agree in conceding to all males the right of at least two distinct looks at every comely female countenance, without any infraction of the rules of courtesy or the sentiment of respect. The first look is necessary to define the person of the individual one meets, so as to avoid it in passing. Any unusual attraction detected in a first glance is a sufficient apology for a second; not a prolonged and impertinent stare, but an appreciating homage of the eyes, such as a stranger may inoffensively yield to a passing image. It is astonishing how morbidly sensitive some vulgar beauties are to the slightest demonstration of this kind.' And then, against the dark foil of these 'vulgar beauties,' our 'Autocrat' sets, in radiant

relief, your real lady. 'When,' he says, 'a *lady* walks the streets, she leaves her virtuous-indignation countenance at home; she knows well enough that the street is a picture-gallery where pretty faces framed in pretty bonnets are meant to be seen, and everybody has a right to see them.' Now, what with this easy-going exchange of opinions on the lawn and this no less easy-going discovery made beside the dying fire, we have something to go upon. Was Simpson right or wrong in stealing that second glance? Shall we condemn or applaud him?

Now everything turns upon the point that the charmingly dressed young lady who so enslaved the wayward eye of George Simpson was *walking up Elizabeth Street.* It must be observed, too, that even the 'Autocrat' is only speaking of pretty faces *on the street.* Indeed, he denominates the principle that he has so clearly laid down *'The Rule of the Road.'* 'My friend,' said Mr. Perker's clerk to Job Trotter, 'you have the key of the street!' And unless you have the key of the street you will never be able to resolve the delicate problem with which this conversation on the lawn has confronted us. 'The street is a picture-gallery,' declares the 'Autocrat'; and it is far more. The street is St. Paul's Cathedral and Parliament House and the Bank of England and the Cattle Market and the Stock Exchange, and a thousand other places, all rolled into one. The street is the place in which we pool everything. On the street we abandon ourselves to each other.

When I close my front gate behind me and step out on to the pavement, I give myself for the time being to the multitude. I am not my own. I voluntarily submit myself to the admiration, and expose myself to the criticism, of all and sundry. I am at the mercy of the rag, tag, and bobtail. As long as I remain within doors my deformities are *my* deformities, and I bear them, as bravely as I may, alone. But when I step out into the street, my deformities become the deformities of the street, and every person I meet is compelled to suffer with me. You cannot lock me up in jail because I happen to be ugly. I insist on taking my ugliness out on to the street with me, and my ugliness shall make the whole street ugly. The street may not like it; but then the street is the street. When I step out into the street I throw my ugliness into the common lot; I toss it into the pool in which we all make common property of everything. When I stride out into the street I become part and parcel of the universe, and the universe becomes part and parcel of me. Now, surely, if the street is compelled to tolerate my ugliness it is entitled to some compensations. And the street enjoys its compensations whenever a charmingly dressed young lady, like the fair creature whose beauty first dazzled and then hypnotized the eyes of George Simpson, comes sailing down it. If my ugliness becomes the ugliness of the street, and if the street is compelled to bear it, then, clearly, her beauty becomes the beauty of the street,

and the street has the right to enjoy it. The street is entitled to her loveliness; *and she knows it.*

I say that she knows it. She knows perfectly well that her beauty is for the delectation of the street. How do I know that she knows it? Easily enough! *She is charmingly dressed!* She was dressed, that is to say, to charm. When she attired herself so bewitchingly in that dainty frock that she is wearing, she was not thinking of warmth. She does not wear it as a protection against the cold. She wears it because it is so pretty; she wears it *for effect.* 'The street,' says our friend the 'Autocrat,' is a 'picture-gallery,' and the young lady whom Simpson met was one of its choicest works of art. Was the picture not intended for exhibition? Why, then, was it so elaborately framed? Was she not meant for Simpson to look at? Why, then, was she so charmingly attired? If she cares to consult her legal adviser he will inform her that, in taking such pains—such justifiable pains—to make herself bewitching, she has admitted the claims of the street.

When you look into the matter a little more closely, you discover something distinctly amiable about this partnership of the street. It is such a delightfully voluntary affair! When this charmingly dressed young lady prepared so carefully for her afternoon walk she was really paying the street a very pretty compliment. She felt that the street deserved the best that she could give it. And so, of

her own free grace, she presented herself to the street. It was a gift, pure and simple, and a very beautiful gift. In the old days it was a matter of compulsion, almost a matter of violence. Emerson tells the story of Pauline de Viguiere, a virtuous and accomplished maiden, who so fired the enthusiasm of her contemporaries by her enchanting form that the citizens of her native city of Toulouse obtained the aid of the civil authorities to compel her to appear publicly on the balcony at least twice a week, and as often as she showed herself the crowd was dangerous to life! It would be easy to multiply such stories, but they are not attractive. Poor little Pauline de Viguiere was *compelled,* mark you! We turn from her, as she stands there on the balcony at Toulouse, and the sensation with which we revert to our own charmingly dressed maiden in Elizabeth Street is akin to the sensation with which we turn from a dark and stuffy hall into the vigorous open air and the silvery moonlight. Poor little Pauline grudged herself to the gapers beneath the balcony; but our Australian maiden gives herself, freely and lovingly, to the street. And, before handing over her present, she takes infinite pains to make it as attractive and beautiful as possible.

I do not happen to know this young lady. I have never seen her open the gate with her neatly gloved hand and trip off up the street. But I can see quite clearly that, whenever she does so, she does a great and sacramental thing. In his famous chapter on

'The Struggle for the Life of Others,' Professor Henry Drummond says that 'from Self-ism to Other-ism is the supreme transition of history.' And, consciously or unconsciously, this demure little maiden of ours makes that tremendous transition whenever she leaves her own gravel walk behind her and steps out into the street. The street is *Other-dom.* The street mixes us all up. The street makes me a part of you and you a part of me. The street smashes up our cliques and shuffles us like a pack of cards. The street brings the rich face to face with the poor, and the poor face to face with the rich. The street gladdens the old by the sight of the young, and sobers the young by the sight of the old. On the street the handsome and the fair are touched to sympathy by the spectacle of disease and deformity, whilst the afflicted are cheered and enlivened by the pageant of chivalry and beauty. But for the street we should all be hermits, recluses, anchorites, and cavemen. The street makes us members one of another. When I open my gate and set out down the street, I make what Henry Drummond calls *the supreme transition of history.* That is worth remembering.

But we have not yet got to the root of the matter. Simpson stole a second glance at the pretty face that passed him in Elizabeth Street, and vaguely hopes that he was justified in doing it. The 'Autocrat' affirms confidently that he *was* justified. But even the 'Autocrat' does not go into the ethics of the

matter; he does not tell us *why* Simpson was justified in looking a second time. Now the question is: *Whose* face was it? Our young lady herself would probably tell us, with a musical laugh, that it was *her* face. I am not so sure. I again advise her to consult her solicitor. It is no good living in a fool's paradise. I once saw a poor demented creature who gleefully assured me, with all the gestures of mystery and confidence, that he owned the entire British Empire. He seemed very happy about it, yet I did not envy him. There is no sense in fancying that you own a thing that is not yours at all. Let this charmingly dressed young lady consult her solicitor about this pretty face that she imagines to be hers. And her solicitor will certainly disillusion her. He will reach down his mustyfusty volumes containing all the statutes and enactments governing the matter; and he will very politely, but very candidly, advise her that she holds no property in her face. As a matter of fact, she does not legally belong to herself at all. If that fair frame of hers were strictly her own property, she could, if she so wished, destroy it, just as she would destroy a book or a picture for which she had no further use. But let her, in some mad moment, set out on an errand of self-destruction, and the law will peremptorily intervene. If she is caught in the prosecution of her rash purpose, she will be haled before the court and reminded, by a sharp and severe punishment, that she cannot treat her body as she would treat a book.

The book is hers, and she can destroy it if she will. But the body—face and all—is *not* hers, and she cannot do as she will with it. She cannot even injure it. Her solicitor will point out to her that she can rip a page out of the book if she so desires, or she can tear the frame of the picture if the frame offends her; but she cannot disfigure that lovely face or maim that beautiful figure of hers. Clearly, therefore, the State holds that she is only the guardian, and not the proprietor, of her body. And if the face is not strictly hers, how can she object to either Simpson or the 'Autocrat' taking a second glance at it?

I dare say that, when her solicitor advises her that her lovely face is not her own, she will be a little vexed with him, and will perhaps leave his office with a toss of the head or a pout of the lips. But she will soon recover from her pretty burst of indignation, and will feel ashamed of her tantrums. And the next Sunday she will be in her place under the gallery, as usual. And the minister will preach from the text, *'What? Know ye not that ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price?'* And then she will see a sacred and beautiful significance in all that transpired in the solicitor's office; and when the congregation rises to sing Miss Havergal's great classic of consecration, 'Take my life, and let it be,' she will sing it with a depth of emotion that she has never discovered in herself before.

VI

THE SOUND OF A GRAND AMEN

I

On the deck of the *City of Columbia* sat two men. During the voyage they had watched each other closely. Each had the feeling that the other had a good deal in common with himself. But they were of different nationalities, and neither understood a word of the other's speech. On Sunday both attended the service held in the saloon. The fact was significant, and each of them noted it, for each knew that the other was unable to follow the prayers. It was their mutual desire to worship that had drawn both to the same spot. And it was on the afternoon of that same Sunday that they sat, not far from each other, under the awning on the promenade deck. One of them, the taller of the two, noticed that the other had a Bible in his hand. He felt that he could remain silent no longer. Approaching his fellow-traveller, he pointed to the Bible, and, moved by a happy inspiration, exclaimed *'Hallelujah!'*

'Amen!' replied the other warmly.

They shook hands. They had found a meeting-

place and a greeting-place among the monumental untranslatables. There are some huge cosmopolitan words that mean too much to be altered or adapted. They do not change their form whenever they happen to cross a frontier. They abide the same in every clime and in every time. The Bible has been translated into half a thousand tongues; men of all climes and of all colours read it in their own language; but in every case one word stands unaltered and unmodified. Whenever Christian people meet together, by whatever name they may be called or under what ever stars they gather, *that* word at least is common to them all. It rings round the world, binding all hearts in one; it is a sound with which all ears are familiar—the sound of a grand *Amen!*

II

We have a few phrases so full of meaning and of beauty that we use them every day, sometimes many times a day. The pity of it is that they become spoiled by frequent utterance and degenerate into the commonplaces of our customary speech. In common with a score of other lovely gems, the word *Amen* has fallen upon this hard fate. We have come to regard it as a decent terminal, a fitting conclusion, a reverent full-stop. In the *Confessions of Roger Fairmaid* there occurs a characteristic example of this. Mr. Fairmaid was a country rector, and he is telling of his conversations with

John Hedgeman, the quaint old parish clerk. One of the parishioners in the village was, it seems, sadly addicted to drink. John lived near this man, and often came in contact with him.

'"And what do you think, sir," he asked Mr. Fairmaid, in a fine burst of indignation, "what do you think 'e 'ad the impertinence to ask me the other day?"

'"Well, what was it?" inquired the rector.

'"'E wanted to know, sir, what was the meaning of *'Amen,'* sir!"

'"Yes, John, and what did you tell him?"

'"Why, I told him, sir, that if he was to go on much longer the same as 'e's going on now, sir—well, it would soon be *'Amen'* with *'im!"'*

I quote the story, not for the sake of its humour, but as a convenient and well-expressed reflection of a popular misapprehension. The Jews say that the *'Amen'* is a very hard nut with a very sweet kernel. Let us try to find that kernel!

III

The fact is that, when heaven speaks to earth, it always waits for an answer. Revelation requires a response. When the law was read, first by Moses and afterwards by Nehemiah, 'all the people answered *Amen, Amen,* with lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.' And why?

Is there not something deeper here than anything that appears upon the surface? I was in a printer's office the other afternoon. And, whilst I waited for the printer to come, a compositor entered the room with a manuscript in one hand and a proof in the other. He handed the proof to the young lady at the desk, and then, from the manuscript, he read aloud to her. And, all the time, she punctuated the reading with monosyllables that indicated the agreement of the one paper with the other. As I looked upon this historic recital of the divine law, punctuated as it was by a running response of *'Amens,'* I seemed to be watching a similar scene. For, in point of fact, each of the people possessed an invisible copy of all that was read. The law that was graven upon tablets of stone was graven also on the fleshy tablets of their hearts. They were comparing Conscience with the Commandments; and their *'Amens,'* like the monosyllables of the printer's daughter, simply expressed the agreement of the one with the other. Cardinal Newman used to say that Conscience is incomparably the greatest proof we possess of the existence of God. The fact that the law *within* agrees so precisely with the law *without* is clearly far more than a coincidence. It is no coincidence that the proof agrees with the manuscript; we know the reason why. It is no coincidence that Conscience applauds the Commandments; the reason is plain. The one is an exact copy of the other because both have issued from beneath the same Hand.

IV

Of that later and lovelier revelation, inscribed upon the pages of the New Testament, the same principle holds true. Heaven speaks to Earth, as Heaven had never spoken to Earth before; and Heaven waits for an answer, as Heaven had never before waited. The principle is exquisitely expressed in a classical pronouncement that has captivated the imagination of the world: *'Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me!'* Heaven standing on Earth's threshold! Heaven knocking at Earth's door! Heaven speaking, speaking, speaking, and waiting, waiting, waiting,—waiting, always waiting for an answer! Is it not Bancroft who tells of a certain woman in Virginia whose baby girl was carried off by marauding Indians? For years and years the heart-broken mother searched for the child, but searched in vain. At length she came upon a tribe of Iroquois who had among them a young woman, of fair skin, whose likeness to herself was too striking to escape notice. The elder woman tried in many ways to establish her identity and to awaken the memory of the girl. But to all the tales she told the younger woman listened without the slightest trace of emotion. Each time the mother hungrily watched her listener's face, fondly hoping for some gleam of recognition, some ray of response. But

there was none. At last it occurred to her to sing the lullaby with which, in the old days, she crooned her babe to sleep. In a moment the girl's face changed; a look of tenderness overspread the hitherto immovable features; the eyes moistened; and before the song was finished the two women were in each other's arms. There are few things more affecting than the longing of love for its own recognition and requital. When Heaven speaks to earth, it waits for an answer. Therein lies the mystic significance of that strange and untranslatable sound—the sound of a grand *Amen.*

V

For the beauty of it is that this is everybody's prayer. It is not only common to all nations, but to all kinds and conditions of men. The little child can lisp it; the aged and the dying, too feeble to utter any other word, can murmur this fervent response to the bedside supplication; the lips that have never learned to frame a prayer have often joined in this. Let me give a few examples.

Charles Godet, the great botanist, is dying. Frederic Godet, his only brother, waits beside the bed, and afterwards tells what happened. 'Death has just separated me from my last dear brother,' he writes. 'Nothing could have been more peaceful than his end. His soul was as calm as his body. Everything proclaimed this *except his words,* for he had a great dread of saying anything that was

not strictly true. I read to him the words "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." He responded with an *Amen.* It was the last word that my ears could catch; an *Amen* that will live for ever in my heart!'

Or take a very different case. We have all been touched to tears by the story of the Brontës—the erratic old father; the frail but dauntless sisters; the dissolute and heartless brother. No novel that the sisters wrote was more romantic than their own tragic and pathetic story. For years Branwell made the days heavy with anxiety and the nights hideous with brutal revelry. Once, at least, in one of his wild outbreaks, he set fire to the rectory. He died in 1848 at the age of thirty-one. His more famous sister has given us a record of the scene. 'I myself,' says Charlotte, 'I myself, with painful, mournful joy, heard him praying softly in his dying moments; and to the last prayer which my father offered up at his bedside he added *Amen.* How unusual that word appeared from his lips those who did not know him cannot conceive.'

And just once more. In his *Vigil* Harold Begbie tells the story of the spiritual struggle of old Doctor Blund. Richard Rodwell, the young vicar, attends him in his last agony, but fails to comfort him. The doctor has heard that it is possible to be *'born again.'* What is it to be *'born again'?* Can *he* be *'born again'?* Rodwell cannot say.

'The dying man raised himself suddenly on an elbow. "You can't help me!" he cried angrily. He grabbed at Rodwell's wrist and held it tightly, fiercely. As he spoke, the fingers tightened their grasp, and he beat Rodwell's hand down to the bed, as it were for emphasis. "You don't know! You're pretending! The words you say are words for the living. I am a dying man. You can't help me! You don't know! You yourself have never been *'born again'!"* '

Rodwell knew that the cruel words were true, and slipped away. An old Methodist minister, a man of ripe experience and gracious bearing, was sent for. Next morning Rodwell met the sexton, who told him of the doctor's death.

'Died at four o'clock this morning! Died happy! Died praising God for His infinite mercies! Died with a smile on his face, like a sunset! Praying he was; his soul went out on an *Amen!*'

'An *Amen* that will live for ever in my heart!' says Frederic Godet, as he gratefully cherishes the dying testimony of his reticent brother.

'An *Amen* such as you cannot conceive!' says Charlotte Brontë, as she reflects thankfully on the evident sincerity of her brother's repentance.

'His soul went out on an *Amen!*' exclaims the sexton, as he tells of the triumphant close of the doctor's terrible struggle.

When Heaven speaks to Earth, it always waits for an answer. But it makes the task of answering

infinitely easy. It even provides codes and signals for those who can command no other eloquence. And, among such code-words, *Amen* is easily the favourite.

VI

Jerome says that, in his day, the congregation expressed its approval of the sentiments uttered in the prayer with an *Amen* so general and so fervent that it sounded in the distance like a clap of thunder or like the booming of the waves upon the shore. I am not surprised. I cannot even think of this majestic untranslatable, this stately cosmopolitan, without recalling little Rosalie in *A Peep Behind the Scenes*. Rosalie had just returned from her great adventure. Having crept away from the rumbling old caravan, and seen the congregation entering the village church, she had slipped into the building with the rest. She had never been in a church before. And, strangely enough, in that first sermon that she ever heard, the minister threw an unexpected light upon the picture of the Good Shepherd that had so long hung in the grimy caravan. As soon as the service was over, Rosalie crept through the dark churchyard and rushed excitedly back to her mother. Breathlessly she told the sick woman the story. The Good Shepherd of the picture was real! The Good Shepherd was alive! The Good Shepherd was the Son of God! ' "He talked about the Good Shepherd, mammie, and twice over he said

the words under the picture—*'the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost!'* And, mammie, you and me want seeking and finding; would it be any good telling Him, mammie?"

' "I don't know, Rosalie, you can try!"

' "Please, Good Shepherd," said Rosalie, looking starwards, "please come and seek me and mammie, and, oh, find us soon, and carry us safe, like the lamb in the picture!"

'Rosalie turned to her mother, and then a sudden terror seized her.

' "Mammie, I ought to have said *Amen!*"

' "Why, Rosalie?"

' "The people at the church said it. Will it do any good without *Amen?*"

' "I don't know, Rosalie; but you can say it now, if you like."

' *"Amen, amen!"* said Rosalie, fervently looking at the stars again.'

'Find us soon and carry us safe!'—such was Rosalie's maiden prayer; and if all of us who desire to make it our own join her in her emphatic and repeated *Amen,* I can understand that, as Jerome says, the volume of assent will be like a clap of thunder or like the booming of the breakers on the shore. There will be joy in the presence of the angels when Heaven hears the sound of *that* grand *Amen!*

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